Kairos: A Journal of Critical Symposium Vol. 5 No. 1 (2020)

A Pathway to Dystopia: An Exploration into the Relationship between Populist Ideology and Necropolitical Regimes

Georgina Lewis
University of Exeter

Abstract: *The recent television programme* Years and Years *followed a family in the UK where topics such as Trump's America, Brexit, and climate change were pertinent. It started as something many British watchers could empathise with (and even laugh along with). Subtly, this deteriorated into a dystopian future and successfully depicted a reality whereby populist politics progressed into a necropolitical state. Each subsequent reduction in civil rights created a domino effect, eventually leading to hidden concentration camps across the country. This essay aims to explore the relationship between populism and necropolitics. Whilst* Years and Years *was a fictional TV series, the Calais 'Jungle', the thousands drowning in the Mediterranean, and Trump's family separation and containment policies at the US-Mexico border, are all evidence of populist politics relating to necropolitics. This depiction of populism straying into necropolitics is one which should be taken seriously, and this essay explores what it is about populist ideologies which create this risk. Further, it determines that populism as a concept is not singularly responsible. There is some valid argument that globalism, or more specifically anti-globalism, has contributed to the rise in populism, and still carries the shadow of colonialism. Eurocentrism dominates, and "others" are left in deathscapes and used as convenient, non-European scapegoats. Overall, there is a complex postcolonial climate of globalisation, which operates as a catalyst for the boundaries between populism and necropolitics to blur.*

Keywords: populism, necropolitics, postcolonial, capitalism, asylum seekers

Introduction

"A quick bullet through the head in Afghanistan would be better than this slow death here". Thom Davies, Arshad Isakjee, and Surindar Dhesi (2017, 1280) conducted fieldwork within so-called Calais 'Jungle' and this compelling quote is from an asylum seeker[1] who was living there. They conversed with asylum

© The Author(s)//psags/kairostext.in
CONTACT Georgina Lewis ✉ Ghl204@exeter.ac.uk

seekers and volunteers alike, to understand the socio-political picture created by French, and EU, policies. During my own fieldwork in the 'Jungle', in 2016, conversations I had with asylum seekers echoed similar sentiments; that dying in the war they had fled would have in the end been easier than the situation they were now trapped in. Northern France 2016, in the Europe I had always believed – naively, perhaps – to be a 'safe space', was home to several thousand asylum seekers stranded at the border between France and the United Kingdom. The conditions the asylum seekers were forced to live in, dire, and the narratives of their journeys through Europe were traumatic and brutal. Asylum seekers and migrants disclosed to me the violence of the border guards at various points in Europe, of having to sleep – in one case heavily pregnant – in ditches, of being shot at, threatened, and beaten. This treacherous journey followed, for many, watching loved ones drowning after the overcrowded boats taking them into Europe sank. They described the horror of fleeing war, to be faced with a gun if refusing to board the obviously overcrowded boat, to be met with violence and cruelty across Europe.

The question then for me, and the question which remains, is *how did it come to this?* The Europe I had learnt about in school was a Europe keen to prevent a repetition of the horrors of the Holocaust; a Europe striving for a real sense of unity. We now have thousands of asylum seekers dying or living in near-death experiences in Europe, a situation that is not particularly new, and with the state visibly and politically paying little to no attention. The police in Calais were, in front of European volunteers, brutal and cruel towards the asylum seekers, going as far as to close down a 'shop' in the 'Jungle' in the acclaimed interests of 'lawful business', and proceed to drink the bottled water in front of thirsty asylum seekers. *How did it come to this?* During my fieldwork I unexpectedly found myself having to provide medical attention to a laboring, heavily pregnant woman, and struggling to convince the authorities to let an ambulance into the 'Jungle'. Eventually myself and the woman's husband had to help walk her to the ambulance which was not permitted any further into the 'Jungle'. As I saw her safely onto the ambulance, the question rang again… *how did it come to this?*

The 'Jungle' in Calais and the journey across Europe for asylum seekers is far from the only environment or incident that's leading scholars to ask this question of *how,* whether that be for refugee crises elsewhere such as in Australia (Maley 2015) or *in principle* entirely different issues, such as Brexit (Fieschi 2019; Hobolt 2016). The reasoning behind my emphasis here will become clearer throughout this essay, however, in short; whilst at an immediate glance the state of living for asylum seekers in Calais may resemble little connection to the vote for Brexit, the reality is that they are of course entirely interlinked. So, also, is the concerning policies from the Trump administration causing families of migrants to be separated and housed in containment facilities in the US; camps which have gone as far as being termed "concentration camps" (Merelli 2018, n.p.). Concern over immigration and

demand on ethnic resources is not a new theory in explaining communities' suspicion of asylum seekers and migrants (Grumke 2013; Caiani and Kroll 2015). However, for this concern to result in refugee camps and migrant camps of this extreme nature, in Western world countries, requires a catalyst which permits politicians to do nothing (Davies et al. 2017).

A concept connecting and underlying all the described situations (and do consider there are more than just this singular concept) is that of populism. Populism is, I argue, the catalyst which propels these issues and concerns into a form which *essentialises* the conditions for asylum seekers and migrants. It is essential for these powers, with their dark histories of colonialism and enslavement, to maintain their cultural superiority by entrapping colonial beings – the asylum seekers and migrants – in a new but nonetheless equally colonial space (Koegler 2017; Davies et al. 2017). Populist politicians pave the way for these paths of permitting new colonial spaces *within* the colonial regime itself, through their ideologies and charismatic boldness (Muller 2016).

It is perhaps unsurprising that all fifteen nationalities Thom Davis and Arshad Isakjee worked with in Calais "Jungle" were "from countries that were once subjugated by European rule" (2019, 43). The geography of the camp's location was not insignificant either, being situated directly between two former colonial powers (Davies and Isakjee 2019). European border politics, and the entrapment of former colonised bodies in camp spaces, are inherently postcolonial. In the current context, the aforementioned suspicion of asylum seekers and the concern of native resources has allowed this colonised body to continue being used as the scapegoat; post-colonial capitalism is not held responsible for the shortcomings felt by the anti-globalist movement, the colonised are. Whereas historically, colonialism entailed the White Europeans transcending borders and entrapping the colonised within their own space, now the colonised beings cross into European borders, and are once again slaves to Europe's regime (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003). Europe's colonial history is not immaterial when understanding the current refugee crisis (Danewid 2017). Once it was the former slave plantations where the colonised were rendered into a state of the living dead (Mbembe 2003); now it is within the refugee camps in Europe, and beyond that – it is on the outskirts of entry into Europe. Tens of thousands of asylum seekers and migrants have drowned attempting to reach Europe (Mantovani 2019); would European policy have continued to let this happen to such an extent if the people drowning were white Europeans?

This contemporary mode of colonisation may be considered in line with Giorgio Agamben's camp paradigm (Agamben 1998). Drawing and expanding on Michel Foucault's notion of biopower (Foucault 1978), Agamben considers the "camp" to be the space containing those living in bare life form (Agamben 1998; Robinson 2011). They are essentially sub-human, and valued as such, in a similar vein to Judith Butler's theory on grievability (2016), and critically the camp provides sovereignty to the (usually colonial) power which holds it (Peters 2014); the inhabitants are subject to a new kind of prison guard in which the

rules are ever-changing, they are not protected by any legal status, and they are considered as animals (Agamben 1998; Robinson 2011). We see this animalized narrative depicted in media in which the 'wrong' people (usually asylum seekers or migrants) are described as animals or monsters undeserving of human rights – a narrative particularly prevalent in populist rhetoric (Robinson 2011).

Whilst the true form definition of populism is one which remains under academic debate (Muller 2016; Roodujin and Pauwels 2011) there are some fundamental components. Firstly, and perhaps the most tangible characteristic, is the charismatic leader; populism is less about the party and more about the individual (Fieschi 2019). Secondly, this leader specifically appeals to the voice of "the people" (Moffit 2016), and anyone holding beliefs outside of the prescribed "people" are automatically labelled part of the "corrupt elite" (Mudde 2015). The result leads to a further component of populism, which is the distinct polarisation of the "people" and the "other" (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). The "other", and/or opposing political stance are considered the "enemy", and as such there is permission granted for an ethos of battle, in which violence may be of necessity (Fieschi 2019). A final key aspect is that whilst populism may well highlight political issues other parties are unable to engage with, such as right-wing anti-immigration, it is nonetheless an ideology with little room for differences of opinion (Mudde 2015).

In Western countries populism is becoming more prominent and, as such, more powerful. Donald Trump, for example, is a populist leader and arguably the most powerful politician in the world as President of the United States. Nigel Farage, also populist, led the successful Brexit campaign. Marine Le Pen, leader of Rassemblement Nationale in France – a right-wing populist party – has voiced extensively her anti-immigration and anti-refugee stance, and in 2015 gained 49 percent of the vote from Calais (Sparks 2015) which, given in 2015 the 'Jungle' still existed with its thousands of asylum seekers, is surely not a coincidence. In all the above scenarios there is a populist leader growing in power. By and large, populism has until recently remained a relatively low 'threat' to politics, however it becomes troublesome and even dangerous when in full power, as is evidenced in countries such as Hungary (Mudde 2015), Philippines (Theriault 2019), and India (Chatterji, Blom Hansen and Jaffrelot 2019).

Vivienne Rook was a fictional populist leader in the recent BBC series *Years and Years* (BBC 2019). Whilst fictional, it was nonetheless a vital piece of television. The critical point to make here is that when this populist leader was in power, it became a believable reality when eventually there were concentration camps around the UK. I spoke to several people in the days and weeks which followed this TV series, and the consistent stumbling block people had felt in watching the series, was how such an absurd idea ("of course there wouldn't be concentration camps around the UK") became entirely believable ("suddenly watching it, I was shocked, because I realised I supported all the policies up until that point and the concentration camps almost made sense" –

both quotations from personal communication with a friend). So here we have an entire work of fiction, but based on present-day politics, going from almost laughable populism not taken too seriously, to a populist leader in full power and constructing concentration camps. This is, perhaps, not so far away from the reality of Donald Trump, from laughable to dangerous reality (Kapoor 2018) consisting of 'concentration camps' for migrants (Merelli 2018).

So, what then is the link; what brings populism through to concentration camps or similar – such as the refugee camps in Europe? And further – how is it that these camps become permitted, normalised racial violence in the form of seclusion and control? (Gržinić and Tatlić2014). Is this transformation from populism to structural violence (Galtung 1969) – for that is in essence what is being described here, as the camps in Europe and America are undeniably forms of violence and repression – a reality and threat to be taken seriously? If so, what is the *purpose* behind the violence, and how is it connected to populism?

The leadership from Narendra Modi in India is a classic example illuminating the impact right wing populism has on violence and repression. Leading the BJP (Bharatiya Janata's Party), the highest priority of Modi is to uphold the rights of the Hindus, at dangerous expense to the "others" – most notably the Muslims (Chatterji et al 2019). As with other populist leadership and discourse, Modi has successfully depicted the Muslims as being not only a threat to resources but also a security threat; following 9/11 this has become a global issue (Chatterji et al. 2019; Krishna 2009). Further, with India we have a state seeking to emerge as a global power and dismiss the remnants of its former colonisation once and for all. The irony there, of course, is that the former colonised country, in its efforts to thrive into modernity, has successfully continued the colonial harmful discourse of 'othering' based on race (Chatterji et al 2019). Indeed, there are some chilling parallels between India's colonised history and its present-day populist leadership; the survival of Muslims unwilling to convert to Hinduism is "akin to indigenous conversions to Catholicism under colonialism and settler colonialism." (Ibid., 407).

Here we have a populist leader, under the legacy of colonialism, with the pressures of globalisation. This combination has led to, as depicted through Angana Chatterji et al.'s expansive analysis, necrogovernance. Muslims have been rendered second-class. They live in terror of vigilante violence endorsed by Modi. They often live in "precarious social and political conditions" (Ibid., 407), and in fear of the police. This is one such lens to examine the political violence under populist power – necrogovernance, and more explicitly, necropolitics (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003; Mbembe 2019).

Necropolitics is a form of violence performed politically through powers of coercion (Koegler 2017), and death is to be capitalised on (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). Necropolitics and its connection to structural violence is a relatively new and unexplored area of research, (Davies et al. 2017) and yet there is already tangible reality. How, then, does this necropolitics and relation to populism look – or could look – across Europe? Whilst several papers establish how

situations such as the 'Jungle' in Calais are necropolitical (Koegler 2017; Davies et al. 2017) an analysis of why *now* necropolitics is such an issue in Europe, and what political forces are behind that (such as populism), is more limited.

Starting with a more in-depth analysis of the concept of necropolitics this essay draws populism and necropolitics together to establish the relationship between both. Overall, this essay examines how populism can – and has – led to the establishment of "death zones" (Montenegro and Pujol 2017, 150) and urges a prioritisation of further research.

Necropolitics

Achille Mbembe first coined the term 'necropolitics' in 2003 and builds upon the theory of biopolitics (Foucault 1978; 1997). With biopolitics, the "legitimate population" are protected and life prioritised (Lemke 2011); it is a method of political control but for the privileged correct people, the "citizens of the sovereign First World capitalist countries" (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014, 43), a politics of life. Mbembe argued that this was insufficient as a theory. Life does not exist without death (Worrall 2018), and necropolitics (with 'necro' literally meaning 'death' in Latin) compliments and entwines with biopolitics rather than exist as two entirely separate concepts (Davies et al. 2017). In necropolitics people are reduced to that of the "living dead" trapped in "death worlds" (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003, 40). Crucial to necropolitics is its link to capitalism and profit; death is an instrument used to benefit the economy (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). Death is managed, controlled, and used to regulate life for the benefit of the entitled privileged citizens (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). The form of necropower, held by the sovereign states, systemically destroys individuals and communities, establishing deathscapes in which "vast populations are subjected to conditions of life which confer upon them the status of the living dead" (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014, 25). Mbembe's theory focused largely on the colonial spaces within Africa (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003), but it stands to reason that necropolitics does not simply exist outside of First World countries. The camps in Europe - containing asylum seekers from the colonised countries – are, I would argue, tangible forms of necropower.

In my fieldwork (Lewis 2016), I included ethnographic observations of the camp itself. The most difficult transition to process was stepping 'out' of France and into an unrecognisable entity. The smells of food indicated cultures of Middle East and Northern Africa, but mingled with the smells of the camp itself, it was a distorted world. Toilets, and there were nowhere near enough for the population – in 2015 one toilet per 75 people (Davies et al. 2017) – were overflowing. There were small rivers of sewage, with tents housing men, women, children, within metres of this. Burning plastic was a strong smell present throughout the camp; asylum seekers attempting to keep warm, not provided by the state with any means of doing so and burning the plethora of litter and plastic instead. The result being, of course, inhaling toxic fumes. The

camp itself was located very close by to two chemical plants, and on a previous toxic waste dumping ground; the asylum seekers were 'housed' on white asbestos and other waste material (Davies et al. 2017).

As for the treatment of the asylum seekers, they had restricted access to food and clean water (Davies et al. 2017), and one volunteer described to me a scene where CRS police slashed a barrel of clean water volunteers had been giving out to asylum seekers. I witnessed times where volunteers were denied entry, at random, into the 'Jungle' when planning to provide sleeping bags and other essential items through the winter months. Often without sufficient warning, police and bulldozers would destroy segments of the camp. Asylum seekers described losing important documents, and items reminding them of home and family, in such processes. This systematic withdrawal and restriction of vital necessities, and destruction of self and safety, are structural forms of violence (Galtung 1969).

However, they are also forms of necropower. Asylum seekers in this situation are reduced to a constant state of suffering; they are not actively being killed, but they're being kept alive at absolute bare minimum, and in "a state of injury" (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003, 21). The lack of sanitation led to infection, lack of food to constant hunger, lack of clean water to sickness (Davies et al. 2017). Asylum seekers described waking in their tents with ice on the inside. On my second trip, a new mother explained to me how her baby had been in hospital twice due to chest infections from the cold, tear gas, and pollution. She herself had developed mastitis and needed hospitalised; she was since relying entirely on formula milk, but with no clean water this had to come in the form of pre-made formula. With no money or ability to travel to a supermarket, the mother was entirely dependent on volunteers buying and bringing her the formula.

Many disclosed violence at the hands of the police. One sixteen-year-old unaccompanied girl showed me extensive, deep bruising down the side of her torso and legs. She explained how a couple of nights before, she had gone to the trains – something many asylum seekers did and do, in attempt to cross the border (Davies et al. 2017) – when police saw her. She took flight, tripped, and when on the floor, was beaten by two CRS police officers, and tear gassed directly in the face. This level of violence was unprecedented. Given her frame (I'm a petite 5 foot 1 and she was smaller than me in height and stature) and the fact she was physically on the floor, injured from tripping, it is safe to assume she posed limited to no threat to two armed police officers. The violence was not about her actions. It was about her race. It was about her status. It was about her being outside of the boundaries of the 'Jungle', and a reminder to the officers of her humanity, her grievability (Butler 2016). Her presence threatened the ideology which entrapped the asylum seekers' in a state of the living dead, in the deathscape of the 'Jungle'. As a vivid example of Caroline Koegler's (2017) discussion on necropolitics, her presence needed to be beaten back into that place. And it was; the beating was so profound that the

girl was forced to return to the camp, too injured to attempt crossing the border that night. However, despite being visibly in considerable pain, the girl spoke boldly of trying again. A few months later, on a further trip to Calais, I was greeted by the girl and her friend – both still in the camp, both still determined to leave, both still receiving beatings for trying. A few months after this, I learnt that her close friend had died trying to cross into the UK. I do not know what happened to the girl. This was beyond racial violence (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014) and even beyond structural violence (Galtung 1969), although both are elements. This was violence in the realm of necropolitics (Koegler 2017; Davies et al. 2017). Necropolitics is the systemic violence towards others permitted for political objectives (Davies et al. 2017). It is not merely about control; it is about control as a *necessary* means for political agendas (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014) and fundamentally for the interest of profit – both profit of economy, and profit of power (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003). It is therefore linked inextricably to capitalism. Death becomes capital. Who may live, and who must die, is the substance of necropolitics (Worrall 2018).

Necropolitics, Globalisation and Capitalism

If capitalism pledges freedom, it has failed for asylum seekers and migrants, who are hit the hardest by modern globalisation (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). The freedom for sovereign (white) European citizens is controlled through biopolitics (ibid.) at the expense of the lives – and deaths – of the Other (ibid.; Mbembe and Meintjes 2003). Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić (2014) offer an interesting analysis on the formation of the EU, not only being in the wake of World War Two, but collectively a formation of West European countries with histories of colonialism and fascism, uniting in order to strengthen "their capitalist economic trade deals" (2014, 4). There is some room for argument that Britain, in response to losing its power as a colonial empire, always treated the EU as "second-best" (Fieschi 2019;) and this underlying tension kept the space open for Brexit, if and when the right person could manage the task.

Human and humanisation is an ever-growing process of economy as part of global capitalism (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). Humans deemed worthy of life are entitled to the capitalist benefits, such as (for now, in any case) freedom of movement, voting, healthcare, (ibid.). Humans deemed disposable (Lamble 2013; Shields et al. 2014; Montenegro and Pujol 2017) have their rights removed or restricted, targeted by the same colonial regime which created the climate of global wars and refugee movements, and placed into a land of no belonging, no cultural norms, a nowhere-land residing directly within the colonial structures (Butler and Athanasiou 2013). The placement of asylum seekers, as disposable humans void of capital, within capitalist countries (and yet also at a safe arm's reach; the 'Jungle' was hardly in the centre of Calais, and Trump's camps are geographically similar) emphasises the *essential* differences in human value (Montenegro and Pujol 2017). Only if there is an

"other" which can be pointed to, labelled the enemy, blamed for capitalist failings, can the basis of necropolitics exist (ibid.). For Europe to claim its policies on refugee movement are for the protection of its own citizens, a clear difference in human capital value and worth must be made as justification (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014).

This can be clearly seen in the necropolitical space of what was the 'Jungle', and the way those who inhabited it were treated. Any sense of identity, of lives becoming grievable (Butler 2016) and of value, was perceived as a threat to the regime (Koegler 2017). This was evident in a micro-scale on the excessively violent beating of the sixteen-year-old girl previously described. On a macro-scale, however, the issue of grievability and capitalist value became evident as the 'Jungle' transformed from a wasted space (Davies et al. 2017) into something of a small town. Despite the barriers, the trauma, the conglomeration of cultures and people, the limited access to essentials, the asylum seekers were still able to transform the 'Jungle' into something resembling a functioning town. During my fieldwork, there were small cafes where asylum seekers cooked their own native food and sold it (mostly to the European volunteers, who – to my view anyway – seemed only too happy to pay back into the economy of the 'Jungle'). Small shops appeared. Places of worship such as a churches and mosques were built. People of different faiths, countries which had otherwise been at war together, and cultures came together to help build what was needed. Muslims helped build the church, Christians helped with the mosque. At one end of the camp I would hear prayer chants. At the other, the sound of worship. As small armies of the CRS police marched in silence through the camp, life blossomed around them, despite their best efforts to restrict, control, and keep asylum seekers in a necropolitical state of suffering.

This development of social economy, of economical purpose and place, threatened to make the asylum seekers more grievable; they became less disposable (Koegler 2017), result being media paying closer attention to the treatment of asylum seekers, and the necropower exposed (ibid.). When this became too much of a threat – too strong an outright rejection from the asylum seekers of performing the necropolitical role inflicted on them – the camp was violently destroyed (ibid.). The necropolitics was threatened by a strengthened sense of life, which had been fueled by a development of economy and livelihood.

Following 9/11, states have evaluated and strengthened border security (Newman 2006). This has happened on a global scale, not just in Europe, but also in the US where – as mentioned previously – camps deemed 'concentration camps' exist solely for the separation and control of migrant families. Terrorism has been a useful tool for politicians to use under the realm of biopolitics; claiming control is necessary for the protection of the sovereign citizens and in actual fact disguising the necropolitical manners in which such protection takes place (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). The irony of this globalisation

of terrorism is that the same states which made borders softer under the guise of capitalist globalisation, are now restricting borders on the grounds of globalised terrorism; in short it is "a battle of globalisation versus globalisation" (Newman 2006). The main victims caught up in this battle are asylum seekers and migrants (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014).

The effects of this globalised battle are felt not only in Calais and America. Over 18,000 asylum seekers have drowned in the Mediterranean since 2014 (Mantovani 2019) in attempts to reach "Fortress Europe" (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). In 2018 the EU implemented the rule restricting private boats from rescuing asylum seekers and made the decision to stop their own rescue naval missions (Arens 2019). The Spanish government threatened fines for any who attempted rescuing asylum seekers, whilst Italy's Salvini has criminalised rescuing of asylum seekers resulting in volunteers actively being arrested if they do so (Arens 2019; Olesen 2018). This is international law being implemented as a means in which to permit the deaths of thousands, in the interests of security. This is intense and fatal necropolitics (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014).

This analysis shows clear evidence of necropolitics in present-day treatment of asylum seekers and migrants. The key question which remains unanswered is *how did it come to this?* The issues of capitalism, globalisation and security concerns are not new to academic debate or to the political world, and thus cannot alone explain current necropolitical events. In order to implement such extreme cases of necropolitics requires a political permission and a cultural acceptance of the norms, as well as the capitalization of people's fear (especially those fearful of globalization, modernization and by-proxy, terrorism) which populist leaders can so emphatically achieve (Berger 2018). One of the key political strategies of right-wing populist leaders is, through their language and form of addressing the "people", use fear as a lever (Virchow 2019). This in turn leads to the "people" not only normalizing the treatment of asylum seekers, etc., but believing it to be what is *necessary*. (Berger 2018; Virchow 2019). This is a complex process and a charismatic leader able to articulate the concerns of the "people" and insist on asylum seekers being the "other"/enemy, would be just the catalyst needed to start the process (Mudde 2015).

Populism and Necropolitics

2016 was perhaps a year of political surprises given the vote for Brexit, and the election of Donald Trump (Mahmud 2019). With Trump being populist, and Brexit headed by a populist politician – Nigel Farage – it stands to reason to examine firstly what fuels the spark in populism and more critically, populist *power* (Mahmud 2019; Bjork-James 2019). Populism has substantially increased its presence over the last few years, across Europe – Poland, Italy, France, Germany, UK – the Philippines, and America, to name but a few (Kapoor 2018). Understanding why this is the case is the first step towards connecting

populism to necropolitics. As I have discussed earlier, the crux of populism comes down to a politician – usually a charming and *relatable* individual – appearing to speak on behalf of the will of the "people" (Mudde 2015) and being resolutely against the so-called corrupt elite. Nigel Farage, for example, made explicit reference to a "People's Army" (BBC, 2014) for the "real" people (evidently the 48 percent who voted remain do not constitute as 'real', on the contrary the opposition of the leave vote are immediately deemed as the Other; the enemy). Donald Trump went as far as to overtly describe any voters in opposition to him as the "other people" who "don't mean anything" (Muller 2016).

In a time where disconnect and globalisation is placing pressures on resources and economy, this concept of the "people" being listened to resonates with many (Muller 2016). Further, whilst populist leaders appear to have a habit of public outrageous statements, this appears to be part of the necessary package (Fieschi 2019). Whilst Nigel Farage, for example, asserted to Van Rompuy, "you have the charisma of a damp rag" (Fieschi 2019, 134) this can be of appeal; whilst rude, Farage had showed himself to appear genuine and unafraid to express his feelings. As a politician, he became more trustworthy the more offensive he became (Fieschi 2019). The same can be said for Trump, who has made little effort to disguise his feelings and beliefs, whether they be presented through speeches or through is Twitter account. With each controversial outburst came criticism, but through this criticism people related to Trump and felt the "perceived attacks on him as condescending attacks on themselves." (Kapoor 2018, 284). In short, each insult towards Trump was internalized by his voters, and only strengthened their loyalty (ibid.).

Within the countries which have seen higher rates of populism, structural difficulties within economy, inequalities, and workforce has led to an increased *perceived* pressure on resources against the higher influx of migrants and asylum seekers (Kapoor 2018). This is where and how the asylum seekers/migrants can so easily become the blamed "other". Capitalism in current climate, with its increased burdens resulting in social disorder, has led to feelings of anger and resentment (Kapoor 2018; Muller 2016). A populist politician able to define the enemy, the scapegoat, and identify with the pressures society are feeling, offers a lifeline; populism, capitalism and globalisation are not and cannot be viewed as separate from each other (Grumke 2013; Fieschi 2019; Cannon 2009). Populism is a capitalist by-product born out of the frustrations of that very capitalist system (Kapoor 2018). Populism allows the emotions of anxiety and frustration for society to be given something to blame; an enemy to fear – the "other" as an entity which will rob the "people" of their rights, security, and privileged enjoyment (Kapoor 2018). The argument from the populist leaders striving for policies which restrict and control immigrants (the "other") in order to protect the "people", is that they are not racist – but nativist (Mudde 2007). They are not *against* immigrants; they are *for* the "people". In the lens of necropolitics, the immigrants must die

in order that "people" may live (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). The evidence behind this motive is clear in the demographic who voted for Trump; the majority were white Americans (of all ages and class). This was an election of race (Bjork-James 2019).

We therefore have the psyche set up for the rise of populism. Add to that the tool of media, which is in and of itself a polarized 'us and them' style of narrative, and populism had the means in which to flourish (Fieschi 2019; Moffit 2016). Social media as a starting point allows the populist leaders to appear as engaging directly with the very people they are allegedly striving to protect; they become more relatable, more real, and more believable (Moffit 2016). Through means such as Twitter, politicians develop the illusion of becoming more accountable, nowadays individuals in society can appear to write directly to the politician of their choice; Donald Trump is separated from us all merely via a screen; twitter and social media offers us a bizarre and fragile combination of intimacy and Big Brother (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). More mainstream politicians may rely on the traditional methods of communication, but this simply makes the more personable appearance of populist leaders more appealing (Moffit 2016).

Tabloids, also, particularly in the UK still hold strong powers (Fieschi 2019). During the Brexit campaign, 75 percent of the Daily Express' coverage and 61 percent of the Daily Mail's were pro-leave; an estimated 80 percent of voters were exposed to a leave article (ibid). Media cannot be understated. We have then the motive and the means. Populism, as previously described, creates a polarised viewpoint whereby anyone who is 'anti-' populist is immediately the enemy, and not part of the "people" (Mudde 2015). The campaign in such a climate shifts into a battle, where the ones who lose are embellished with shame, and cannot become a part of the majority even after the vote (Fieschi 2019). Violence becomes justified as a means to an end, because now there is an enemy, rather than a political opposer, and the enemy must be conquered (Fieschi 2019). It is not too difficult to see how the ideology of populism draws parallels with that of colonialism.

Once in power, then, what does the populist leader do? If not in full power, but with enough influence, their threat of further power alone can act as a motivator for the mainstream parties to adapt their own policies in line with that of the populists (Mudde 2007).In actual power, populism has already proven to be dangerous (Mudde 2015); one only has to look at Trump's 'concentration camps' to establish this. His nativist rhetoric allows widespread acceptance (even amongst the rightful uproar and horror) that these camps are a *necessary* means in which to protect the "people". This appears to be biopolitical but is in fact the shift from biopolitics into necropolitics (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014), but disguised, as the privileged people receive their protection in exchange for the lives of the less grievable, more easily disposed of, migrants. (Butler 2016; Davies et al. 2017).

Finally, the bridge between populism and necropolitics. Zarana Papic (2002) coined the term Turbo-Fascism to describe a form of politics prioritising nationalism through means of racial segregation and seclusion. Turbo-Fascism has concentration camps, violence accepted to the "other", restriction and silencing of multiculturalism, nationalistic views, a normalisation of degradation and ultimate removal of the "other", and relies heavily on this normalisation of the "people" and "other" to be established prior to deaths (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014, 41). All of this can be evidenced through Trump's leadership. In Slovenia, the horrors of the Erased People – where 30,000 people lost all their rights and basic social existence due to their ethnicity - also present evidence of Turbo-Fascism (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014). My argument here is that populism by itself perhaps is not powerful enough to become necropolitical; it is an ideology rather than a force. But populism *in power* can become Turbo-Fascist. This Turbo-Fascism results in necropolitical regimes; in deathscapes (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003) at the US border whereby children are refused medical treatment and migrants die in custody (Rappleye and Seville 2019), in 'drug wars' claiming over 20,000 lives in the Philippines (Theriault 2019), in refugee camps where basic survival is pushed to the limit (Davies et al. 2017) and in the Mediterranean where it has become 'normal' for thousands of asylum seekers to drown in an attempt to reach safety (Mantovani 2019). All of these are vivid depictions of necropolitics, and all of these are influenced by populist politics and leaders.

Conclusion

Increased support for populism – in particular the anti-immigration stance born out of the globalisation of terrorism (Newman 2006) - has led to a normalisation of violence, death and restriction on anyone deemed to be the "other", as a matter of sovereign protection. Biopolitics of refugee movement has transformed into necropolitical structural violence (Davies et al. 2017). Populism is widespread enough across Europe to have influence on mainstream politics (Mudde 2007), and supported enough that the necropolitical circumstances asylum seekers and migrants are being forced to endure have becoming normalised and accepted as the necessary means to protect capital (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014).

In cases where populism is in full power, the policy of necropower becomes more pertinent and tangible (Rappleye and Seville 2019). The very regime with its dark history of colonisation has successfully convinced the majority of the sovereign citizens that the threat is not their own politicians and post-colonial capitalist policies, the threat is – as it was always presented as being – the colonised body (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003). The asylum seekers literally become trapped and enslaved within the body of the regime (Koegler 2017) and are left to die (Mbembe and Meintjes 2003; Gržinić and Tatlić 2014).

The relationship is one which cannot be ignored, for the risks posed are already deadly, and urgent further research into this is a priority. The dystopian pathway from the laughable populist 'Vivienne Rook' to the darkness of concentration camps in the UK as a means of protecting resources for the correct "people", is perhaps not as fictional as we would like to think. Populism demands necropolitics under the pretense of biopolitics, Turbo-Fascism enables necropolitics, and the post-colonial capitalist world justifies and normalises it.

Notes

[1] The term 'asylum seeker' has been used in place of 'refugee' in this essay after some consideration. Whilst the camps across Europe, such as in France, are frequently referred to as 'refugee camps', and indeed the people living in them as either 'refugees' or 'migrants', the technical reality is that during the specific space of living in such a camp, they are awaiting the opportunity to seek refuge (in the UK, in this instance), and are as such 'asylum seekers' rather than 'refugees'. This difficulty in defining their 'correct' identity only serves as a reminder of the stateless space in which these individuals find themselves; trapped between physical borders of countries, and between deeper borders of identity.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. 1998. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Arens, Marianne. 2019. "Refugee Death Toll Rises in Mediterranean Sea Graveyard." *World Socialist Web Site*, July 11. https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/07/11/medi-j11.html

BBC. 2014. "EU Debate: Nigel Farage issues call for 'join peoples army'". *BBC Online*, April 2. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-politics-26857594/eu-debatenigel-farage-issues-call-to-join-people-s-army

_______________. 2019. "Years and Years." *BBC Media Centre*, May 31. https://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/mediapacks/years-and-years

Berger, Suzanne. 2018. "Globalization survived Populism once before – and it can again." *Boston Review: A Political and Literary Forum*, January 30. http://bostonreview.net/class-inequality/suzanne-berger-globalization-survived-populism

Bjork-James, Sophie. 2019. "Americanism, Trump, and Uniting the White Right." In *Beyond Populism: Angry Politics and the Twilight of Neoliberalism,* edited by Jeff Maskovsky and Sophie Bjork-James, 42-61. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press.

Butler, Judith. 2016. *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

_______________ and Athena Athanasiou. 2013. *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political (PCVS-Polity Conversations Series).* Cambridge: Polity Press

Caiani, Manuala and Patricia Kroll. 2015. "The Transnationalization of the Extreme Right and the Use of the Internet." *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice* 39 (4): 333-351.

Cannon, Barry. 2009. *Hugo Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution: Populism and Democracy in a Globalised Age.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Chatterji, Angana P., Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot. 2019. *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India*. London: Hurst.

Danewid, Ida. 2017. "White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean: Hospitality and the Erasure of History." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (7): 1674-1689.

Davies, Thom and Arshad Isakjee. 2019. "Ruins of Empire: Asylum Seekers, Race and the Postcolonial Geographies of European Migrant Camps." *Geoforum* 102: 214-217.

_______________, Arshad Isakjee and Surindar Dhesi. 2017. "Violent Inaction: The Necropolitical Experience of Asylum Seekers in Europe." *Antipode* 49 (5): 1263-1284.

DW. 2019. "France: Far-Right Marine Le Pen to Run For President Again." *DW News*, January 16. https://www.dw.com/en/france-far-right-marine-le-pen-to-run-for-president-again/a-52034080

Fieschi, Catherine. 2019. *Populocracy: The Tyranny of Authenticity and the Rise of Populism.* Newcastle Upon Tyne: Agenda Publishing.

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979.* Naissance de la Biopolitique: Cours au College de France.

_______________. 1997. *The Politics of Truth.* Los Angeles: Semiotexte.

Galtung, Johan. 1969. "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research." *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (3): 167-191.

Grumke, Thomas. 2013. "Globalized anti-Globalists: The Ideological Basis of the Internationalization of Right-wing Extremism." In *Right-wing Radicalism Today: Perspectives from Europe and the US*, edited by S. von Mering and T. W. McCarty, 13-31. London: Routledge.

Gržinić, Marina and Šefik Tatlić. 2014. *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life.* Plymouth: Lexington Books.

Hobolt, Sara B. 2016. "The Brexit Vote: A Divided Nation, a Divided Continent." *Journal of European Public Policy* 23 (9): 1259-1277.

Kapoor, Ilan. 2018. *Psychoanalysis and the GlObal.* Lincoln, London: University of Nebraska Press

Koegler, Caroline. 2017. "Precarious Urbanity: 'The Jungle' (Calais) and the Politics of Performing the Urban." *Postcolonial Text* 12 (3): https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/view/2309

Krishna, Sankaran. 2009. *Globalization and Postcolonialism: Hegemony and Resistance in the Twenty-first Century.* Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield.

Lamble, Sarah. 2013. "Queer Necropolitics and the Expanding Carceral State: Interrogating Sexual Investments in Punishment." *Law and Critique* 24 (3): 229-253.

Lemke, Thomas. 2011. *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*. New York: New York University Press.

Lewis, Georgina. 2016. "'Becoming' a Volunteer: A Critical Analysis of the Volunteer Identity Construction in Calais Refugee Camp 'The Jungle.'" Unpublished Bachelor Thesis. University of Exeter.

Mahmud, Lilith. 2019. "Fascism, a Haunting: Spectral Politics and Antifascist Resistance in Twenty-First-Century-Italy." In *Beyond Populism: Angry Politics and the Twilight of Neoliberalism*, edited by J. Maskovsky and S. Bjork-James, 141-167. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press.

Maley, William. 2015. "Australian Refugee Policy: The Triumph of Populism over Liberalism." In *We Are Better Than This,* edited by T. Winton and Robyn Cadwallader, 67-86. Adelaide: ATF Press

Mantovani, Stephanie, N.C. 2019. "Migrant, refugee death toll in Mediterranean tops 1000 for sixth year – U.N." *Reuters: World News*, October 1. https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-europe-migrants/migrant-refugee-death-toll-in-mediterranean-tops-1000-for-sixth-year-u-n-idUKKBN1WG4B9

Mbembe, Achille. 2019. *Necropolitics.* Durham: Duke University Press.

_______________ and Libby Meintjes. 2003. "Necropolitics." *Public Culture* 15 (1): 11-40.

Merelli, Annalisa. 2018. "Is it fair to call the US's migrant child detention centers 'concentration camps'?" *Quartz*, June 19. https://qz.com/1308141/are-us-immigrant-child-detention-centers-concentration-camps/

Moffit, Benjamin. 2016. *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Montenegro, Marisela and Joan Pujol. 2017. "Bordering, Exclusions and Necropolitics." *Qualitative Research Journal* 17 (3): 142-154

Mudde, Cas 2007. "Demand-side: In Search of the Perfect Breeding Ground." In *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, edited by Cas Muddle, 201-231. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mudde, Cas. 2015. "The Problem with Populism." *The Guardian*, February 17. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/17/problem-populism-syriza-podemos-dark-side-europe

Muller, Jan-Werner. 2016. *What is Populism?* London: Penguin.

Newman, David. 2006. "Borders and Bordering Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue." *European Journal of Social Theory* 9 (2): 171-186.

Olesen, Anders P. 2018. "The volunteers facing jail for rescuing migrants in the Mediterranean." *The Ferret*, September 12. https://theferret.scot/volunteers-facing-jail-rescuing-migrants-mediterranean/

Papic, Zarana. 2002. "Europe after 1989: Ethnic Wars, the Fascination of Social Life and Body Politics in Serbia." *Filozofski Vestnik* 23 (2): 191-204.

Peters, Michael. A. 2014. "Giorgio Agamben's Homo Sacer Project." *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 46 (4): 327-333.

Rappleye, Hannah and Lisa. R. Seville. 2019. "24 immigrants have died in ICE custody during the Trump administration." *NBC News*. June 9. https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/24-immigrants-have-died-ice-custody-during-trump-administration-n1015291

Robinson, Andrew. 2011. "In Theory Giorgio Agamben: the state and the concentration camp." *Ceasefire*. January 7. https://ceasefiremagazine.co.uk/in-theory-giorgio-agamben-the-state-and-the-concentration-camp/

Rooduijn, Matthijs and Teun Pauwels. 2011. "Measuring Populism: Comparing Two Methods of Content Analysis." *West European Politics* 34 (6): 1272-1283.

Shields, Rachel, Joshua I. Newman and Christopher McLeod. 2014. "Life in Three Deaths." *Cultural Studies Critical Methodologies* 14 (5): 425-437

Sparks, Ian. 2015. "Calais is the most Right wing town in France: Marine Le Pen's National Front score massive 49 per cent of votes in the home of the Jungle." *Daily Mail*, December 9. https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3353002/CalaisRight-wing-townFrance-Marine-Le-Pen-s-National-score-massive-49-centvotes-home-Jungle.html

Theriault, Noah. 2019. "Euphemisms We Die By: On Eco-Anxiety, Necropolitics, and Green Authoritarianism in the Philippines." In *Beyond Populism: Angry Politics and the Twilight of Neoliberalism,* edited by Maskovsky, Jeff and Sophie Bjork-James, 182-209. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press.

Virchow, Fabian. 2019. "Globalization, Crisis, and Right-Wing Populism in Context." In *Stifled Progress – International Perspectives on Social Work and Social Policy in the Era of Right-Wing Populism,* edited by J. Fischer and Dunn K. Opladen, 59-70. Berlin; Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich.

Worrall, Grace. 2018. "From Biopower to Necropolitics, Techniques of Control Through the Lens of Racialisation". *BA Hons Dissertation: Manchester Metropolitan University*. July 1-36. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326211056_Biopower_Biopolitics_and_Necropolitics.

About the Author:

Georgina Lewis is currently a first-year PhD student at the University of Exeter. Her research focuses on how the political violence in Europe towards refugees is rendered in/visible, and in turn affects the in/visibility of refugees and their experiences. Her research interests surrounding this include typologies of violence, social identity, and political ideologies and mechanisms. Prior to beginning her PhD, Georgina worked in NHS mental health services and her interest in mental health continues to shape elements of her research, predominantly how trauma can be expressed and transformed through the medium of music.