HOW THE SOCIALISM OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BECAME POPULISM, AND HOW ITS LEADERS USE RHETORIC TO SUSTAIN THEMSELVES IN POWER. THE ECUADORIAN CASE

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1 – What is the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century?</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Heinz Dieterich and the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. From Participative Democracy to Populism</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2 – Latin America and Populism</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3 - Rhetoric and its Importance for the Populist Regimes. The Ecuadorian Case</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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ABSTRACT

During the last decades, people all around the world have been speaking about a new wave of socialist ideas; in Europe they have called it the “new Left”, whereas in Latin America, leaders have defined themselves as part of the “Socialism of the Twenty-First Century”, a theory created by Heinz Dieterich, enforced by Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. But few people have stopped to think what this so-called “Socialism of the Twenty-First Century” is.

In practice, the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century is not about the nationalisation of the industries, but about allowing the market system to function under the control of the state. In theory it proposes a transition from the capitalist society to a true participative democracy, making changes in the economic and political scheme.

Many authors agree that the countries that are implementing this new socialism have become populist regimes, resorting on the same tools for people’s inclusion, social participation via referenda, and, most of all, the same rhetorical style. The study of populism has led to the conclusion that “Populism is not a type of movement, but a political logic”, born by many different factors like crises, social inequality, and a lack of representation and identity of the population.

Latin America has been more vulnerable to the re-emergence of populism and it’s hard to understand why, because many theorists argue that populism is a state of exception that comes with the crises and finishes with their end. However, in Latin America populism has been the norm rather than the exception.

Rhetoric has been used throughout all ages, and for many different purposes. However, it has become a powerful tool for the leaders of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century to connect with the people. Their rhetoric is calculated to provoke immediate political results, by seeking the destruction of the opposition, using strong anti-American rhetoric, symbolisms, metaphors, and an easy language. But also they relate to them by the use of body language, visiting towns and visiting common people in their daily activities.
There is a terrible risk in this relationship, for it gives the leaders such a power that can lead them to become authoritarian “in the name of the people”, and perpetrate themselves in power by their strong public support.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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How the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century became Populism, and how its Leaders use Rhetoric to sustain themselves in Power. The Ecuadorean case

Since the beginning of the new millennium, most of the countries of Latin America have witnessed the new arousal of the Left. Countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador have presented the world the “new Left” as an alternative to the neo-liberal system that had been implemented in previous years in those countries; instead they started implementing a new type of socialism, a socialism for the new era, or the so-called “Socialism of the Twenty-First Century”. However, even if this term is well renowned, very few people actually know what it means and implies.

The present dissertation aims to critically analyse and unveil what the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century is, both as an economic theory and as a political system, and how it became basic populism. It will also approach the rhetorical factor of these regimes, which is, without doubt, one of the main tools used by the leaders to implement the system, and to sustain themselves in power. For that purpose I will use the case study of Ecuador and its “citizen revolution” by analysing the rhetoric used by its President, Rafael Correa, during the last seven years.

Being an Ecuadorean myself, this topic stirred a lot of interest in me, not only because it concerns the government of my country, but because I realise that, even if people live in Ecuador, they still haven’t stop to actually understand what is going on and what is this proposal of government about. Also, I hope to contribute to the University by bringing some research about Latin America, because I found out that
there isn’t much literature on the affairs of the region, especially of Ecuador, and even less about this topic, which makes it fresh and, hopefully, interesting for future generations of students.

The main questions that will be addressed are what exactly this new form of socialism is and why does it get intertwined with purely populist practices. Also how important are rhetoric and propaganda for this type of regime to succeed, and how do the leaders of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century use them in their favour. I will attempt to answer these interrogations by digging into the most theoretical conceptions of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, populism, and rhetoric, among others, and confront them with empirical evidence. Hopefully, by the end of this study, this very confusing and, apparently, contradictory new system of government will be clear and easily understandable.

This dissertation is divided in two main parts. The first part, purely theoretical, begins in chapter one by addressing the crucial question of “What is the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century?”, and it describes the genesis of the theory and how it became popular, only to discover that what started as an economic system proposal had to be transformed into a new way of government. Therefore, it contains two core elements that are studied separately: on the one hand, we have an economical one, in which the concepts of regional developmentalism and economy of equivalences are analysed and clarified; on the other hand, there is the political element, in which I analyse the conception of participative democracy, key feature of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, and how it unchains itself into a basic populist regime. Also, in
chapter two, I analyse the populist phenomenon in Latin America and the reasons for the region’s proclivity to succumb to this style of politics.

The second part of the dissertation, beginning in chapter three, consists of the analysis of the concept and main features of political rhetoric, linking them to populism and authoritarian regimes, and approaching what I consider to be the rhetoric style of modern times. This I do both by analysing the existing literature on the subject and mixing this theoretical framework with the empirical evidence shown by the case study of Ecuador and Rafael Correa’s “Citizen Revolution”. In this second section, I confront the theory with samples of what I consider to be the main speeches of Correa during the seven years he has been in power, as a practical demonstration of how rhetoric is used by the populist regimes of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century to sustain themselves in power. I hope the reader will find this dissertation as informative and clear as possible and that it serves as a good tool for future references on the topic.
Chapter 1 – What is the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century?

During the last decades, people all around the world have been speaking about a new wave of socialist ideas; in Europe they have called it the “new Left”, whereas in the American continent, especially in Latin America, most of the leaders of the new arising Left have defined themselves as part of the “Socialism of the Twenty-First Century”. Since 1999, when Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías won the Presidential election in Venezuela for the first time, in almost all the Latin American countries the Left started to rule again. But very few have stopped to analyse what this “new” Left, or this so-called Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, exactly is, which is what I will attempt to explain in this chapter. In the words of Marta Harnecker, “in order to judge a government, it is not so important to consider the pace at which it advances as the direction it is taking. This goal, this direction, has been defined by several of our governments as “twenty-first century socialism.”” (Harnecker, 2010)

Chávez was, indeed, the first leader to identify himself as a “socialist of the twenty-first century”, and, by doing that, he was the one responsible for making the term popular and public. On December 5, 2004, Chávez surprised the world at the closing ceremony of the World Meeting of Intellectuals and Artists in Defence of Humanity, held in Caracas, Venezuela, when he stated that it was necessary to try and rescue the concept of socialism. A few weeks later, he spoke of it during the World Social Forum on January 30, 2005, in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and he “reiterated the need to overcome capitalism and build socialism, but he also warned: “We have to reinvent socialism. It can’t be the kind of socialism we saw in the Soviet Union.” Moreover, it’s
not a matter of “resorting to state capitalism.” If we do that, we will fall “into the same distortion as the Soviet Union did” (Idem).

Then, on February 25, 2005, during his speech at the fourth Social Debt Summit he stated that “there was no alternative to capitalism other than socialism. But, he warned, it had to be different than the socialisms we have known; we would have to “invent twenty-first century socialism.” This was the first time the term twenty-first century socialism was used in public” (Idem), even though it was previously used in 2000 by Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulian in his book Twenty-First Century Socialism: The Fifth Way. Later on that same year “on his live show “Aló Presidente” (“Hello President”) on March 27, 2005, Commander Chávez made clear his original statement that his government was of a “socialist cut” and that socialism in Venezuela would be of a democratic and participative character, in accordance “with the original ideas of Karl Marx and Fredrik Engels”. He commented […] ‘I am a socialist from the new era, from the 21st century, and we are proposing the world to review the thesis of the Christian socialism…’” (Dieterich, 2005, p. 2. Original in Spanish).

When Chávez won the election in 1998, apart from Fidel Castro in Cuba, he was the only president in Latin America identified with the left. But his triumph generated a certain tendency in the entire region, and so, a couple of years later, in most of the Latin American countries leaders from the left won the presidential elections.

“In 2002 Ricardo Lagos took the presidency in Chile and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva… was elected in Brazil. Néstor Kirchner won the presidency in Argentina in 2003, and Tabaré Vázquez won in Uruguay in 2005. In 2006 Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Rafael Correa in Ecuador, and Daniel

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Ortega in Nicaragua were elected. In 2007 Cristina Fernández won in Argentina and Álvaro Colom won in Guatemala. In 2008 Fernando Lugo won in Paraguay, and in 2009 Mauricio Funes was elected in El Salvador, Rafael Correa won a second term in Ecuador, José Mujica won in a runoff election in Uruguay, and Evo Morales was re-elected with a large majority in Bolivia” (Harnecker, 2010).

All of these political leaders saw in Chávez and his government a true leadership to offer the people an alternative to what Rafael Correa has called the “long neoliberal night”. They were all supposed to join forces in this new form of socialism, but in the end, only the Presidents of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia and Nicaragua remained defending the so-called Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, and afterwards founding the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA for its name in Spanish) (Encyclopaedia Britannica)², whereas the rest of leftist leaders took a different direction not following the example of Chávez, but doing things their own way.

Either way, all these governments have several features in common, which include three basic components that Chávez clearly stated: 1) economic transformation towards the true Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, created by Heinz Dieterich and enforced by Chávez himself; 2) in the political sphere, a democracy where people can participate more actively in a protagonist way; and, 3) “socialist ethics based on love, solidarity, and equality between women and men, everybody. These socialist ideas and values are very old. They can be found according to Chávez, in biblical texts, in the Gospel, and in the practices of our indigenous peoples” (Idem). These three elements demonstrate that, what started as a simple economic model, was transformed into a whole regime; therefore, it is important to point out that this regime has two components as well: one purely economical and the other political. I believe that, in

² http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1271045/Bolivarian-Alliance-for-the-Peoples-of-Our-America-ALBA
order to truly understand this form of government, we need to analyse each component separately, and so I will do, beginning with the economical part.

1.1 Heinz Dieterich and the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century

On 1996, the German theorist Heinz Dieterich came out with a new proposal of an economic system based in the teachings of the classical socialist theorists, but with certain differences in the way to apply it to avoid failure. He was critical about the way that Soviet socialism was applied, and, recognizing its past defects, he developed a whole study about how Socialism should be implemented in the new era of the Twenty-First Century. He said that the problem of classical socialism, as we know it up to these days, is that “its academic discourse... is sustained on the bases of an idealist philosophy of the identity” (Dieterich, 2006, p. 1. Original in Spanish). He also explained that the socialist ideology is wrong in “identifying the state property with the social property, the state surplus with the social surplus and the policies of the Party with the will of the majorities” (Idem), because, by doing that, it annihilates the dialectic of reality, that allows the contradiction as a basic source of socialism itself, while imposing structures of reality as holy schemes that respond only to one individual, in this case the leader.

During the 70s, the ideological and economic crisis inherited after the wars, forced the socialist leaders of the world to choose between three possible ways in order to sustain themselves in power: they could return to market, advance towards the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, or try to combine elements of both systems in a “socialist market”. As Dieterich has noted, it was admirable that none of the socialist
parties would choose to advance towards the new era socialism, and he found three main reasons to explain that phenomenon: “1. The lack of a scientific theory for the transition towards the new socialism, or the incapacity of the communist parties to understand the socialism as a phenomenon on development…; 2. A party anchylosed by the pragmatism and opportunism that administered the revolutionary process, instead of directing it; and, 3. A Party-State lacking cybernetic faculties.” (Dieterich, 2006, p. 4. Original in Spanish).

In practice, the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century is not about the nationalisation of the industries, but about allowing the market system to function under the control of the state. It proposes a transition from the capitalist society to a true participative democracy. In this sense, Dieterich has explained the differences between those two concepts in the following way:

Capitalism… is sustained on a capitalist market economy, a State at the service of an economic elite (classist), and a democracy that excludes the citizens from the main public decisions. In this environment, the human being is not more than a “homunculus”, a cartoon of what it should be.

Participative democracy will rest upon an economy of equivalences democratically organized, a State of the majorities and a direct democracy in the public affairs considered transcendental for the citizens. Those three basic institutions, which will regulate the life of the society and the State, will allow the human beings to find their plain rational-critical, ethic, and aesthetic evolution. (Dieterich, 2005, p. 7. Original in Spanish)

Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, according to Dieterich, is sustained in six necessary and sufficient conditions. Three of them are sufficient economic conditions: value, equivalence, and cybernetic. The other three conditions are the necessary and auxiliary socio-political conditions, which are: participative democracy, education and redistribution (Dieterich, 2005). Later on, these conditions were simplified for their
study and reduced to four fundamental axes: 1) the regional democratic developmentalism; 2) a system of equivalence economy that takes into account the value of labour beyond the system of prices; 3) a more participative and protagonist democracy; and, 4) the creation of true grassroots organisations.

The regional democratic developmentalism is an economic theory based in overcoming the inequality of the international trade terms, in which the countries that produce raw materials are in a sort of disadvantage in front of those who process them into elaborated goods, therefore the latter become rich thanks to the production of materials of the previous, who remain poor. In the eyes of the socialists, this is another form of exploitation from the first world countries towards the third world ones, and therefore, according to Dieterich, “the ladder towards Latin American greatness is regional democratic developmentalism, based in unified advanced technologies, exercised through the Regional Block of Power (BPR, for its name in Spanish), and with its strategic horizon on post-capitalist participative democracy” (Dieterich, 2003. Original in Spanish). In the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, according to him, there will be no exploitation because no one will live at the expense of others.

The economic system of equivalences is the cornerstone of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century. According to Heinz Dieterich (2006), classical socialism had two main problems: the first one was its necessity to mystify and falsely identify the state with the social, punishing the ones that didn’t agree with the government and calling them “enemies of the people”. The second one, that the economic system, even if it wasn’t a capitalist system, it wasn’t either the socialist economy that Marx and Engels had planned, because it wasn’t based on the value of time inputs, and the trade of
equivalent values among direct producers (Dieterich, 2006). It was a mixture of economic models that kept the price system as the trade currency, giving birth to what some authors have called “state capitalism”, which was one of the facets of Soviet socialism that were rejected, along with “statism…, totalitarianism, bureaucratic central planning, the kind of collectivism that seeks to homogenize without respecting differences, productivism (which stresses the growth of productive forces without being concerned about the need to protect nature), dogmatism, atheism, and the need for a single party to lead the transition process” (Harnecker, 2010).

In his book, Dieterich (2005) explains that the economy is understood as the transformation of nature into goods and services, accomplished by hard work and the use of tools and machines, in order to satisfy the necessities of human being. The legal relationship regulating the process of transformation, appropriation and distribution of nature generates what we know as property, which, according to Dieterich, is of three different types: social property (that belongs to all), private property (that belongs to a few) and state’s property (which, in my opinion, doesn’t belong to anyone). Once we have property, we can begin to speak about the surplus, understood as the economic excesses that a workday leaves to the producers, after they have satisfied their basic needs. Therefore, a normal workday can be divided in two parts: the first one, called “necessary work”, in which the worker generates the necessary products to compensate the human and material forces that were spent during the day; and the second one, needed to produce the excesses or the plus product, called in the economic world “plus work”. (Dieterich, 2005).
In this scenario, he explains that the so renowned struggle of classes that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels used as base for their Communist Manifesto is a phenomenon that happens because the different social classes (in their words, capital owners and proletarians) fight each other for the social wealth, or, in other words, the economic surplus generated by society. In a capitalist system – or crematistic economy, as he has named it – the elites distribute this surplus among them and leave as little as possible for the majorities. In contrast, within the system of equivalences, “in the new socialism the cost of a product will be measured by the time required to produce it. Justice consists on trading work efforts measured in time (values) of the same magnitude. The gratification of the worker (income) is directly proportional to the hours that he/she contributes to the creation of the common social wealth” (Dieterich, 2005, p. 174. Original in Spanish). Which means that, given that the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century is a proposal to create a true participative democracy, the citizens will be able to decide if they want to work the necessary hours to satisfy only their basic needs, or if they prefer to work more hours in order to produce a surplus, but not in the terms of the prize system, instead in a system where the rewards will be a result of value equivalences.

The elements of a true participative democracy and the creation of strong grassroots organizations can be subsumed as a single component, and they correspond to the political sphere of the project. Therefore, I will explain them thoroughly in the following section.

1.2 From Participative Democracy to Populism
The political scheme of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century consists on building a true participative and direct democracy in which the people can be taken into account as the actual protagonists in the government decisions that concern them. This type of democracy, linked with the creation of strong grassroots organizations, constitute the political regime that the governments of Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua promised their constituents, and has been, up to this moment, the key tool for the gradual transformation of the state in those countries.

But what exactly is this “participative democracy” these leaders are trying to implement? Heinz Dieterich (2005) argues that democracy is a characteristic of a social system that can be studied from three different dimensions: first, the social democracy, referring to the quality of material life; second, the formal democracy, understood as the group of norms that regulate the powers, rights and duties of the entities that conform the social system; and third, the participative democracy, in which the decisions of transcendental public affairs are taken by the majorities within society, protecting, nevertheless, the minorities.

Surprisingly enough, the founder of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century has acknowledged that in a social system, formal democracy has to be measured by the existence and functioning of the following institutions:

1. Division of powers (Montesquieu); 2. Constitution (Magna Charta), with a clear formal – democratic definition of the powers, rights and duties of the collective and individual entities of the nation, the recognition of the people’s sovereignty as the only resource of legitimacy for the state authorities….; 3. A formal – democratic electoral system to choose the political representatives of the nation, from municipal to federal level, through the political parties; 4. The Parliament as the representative of the popular power’s sovereignty; 5. A federative structure of the State; 6. The existence of media that is not owned by
the State; 7. Free access to / use of private property and its protection; 8. The Rule of Law, including the protection of minorities; 9. The constitutive dichotomy between the private and public sphere. (Dieterich, 2005, p. 92-93. Original in Spanish)

However, after this recognition, he inconsistently says that these institutions have been understood as constitutive to democracy “by the bourgeois political liberalism” and that these mechanisms have been degraded by the dominant elites. Therefore he proposes a “post-bourgeois” society in which these elements are deepened in order for the political and civil society to handle them.

This being said, let’s analyse what is “participative democracy”. According to Dieterich, “the concept of “participative democracy” refers to the real capacity of the majority of citizens to decide over the main public affairs of the nation” (Dieterich, 2005, p. 93). The followers of this philosophy think that formal democracy is not a real democracy, because the only time in which the citizens actually make decisions is during the periodic elections to choose between different candidates and parties to represent the population in the different stages of power. Personally, I don’t agree with this because I believe that democracy means much more than simply going to vote, and participation by civil society can happen all the time in different ways, such as public protests, rallies, the formation of civic organizations or even making part of existing government campaigns. However, that is probably why the author argues that “in participative democracy, that capacity won’t be circumstantial and exclusive of the political sphere, but permanent and extensive to all the spheres of the social life. It’s all about the end of representative democracy… and its shift to direct or plebiscitary democracy” (Idem).
Nevertheless, this whole idea of the people being sovereign and having active participation, is immediately contradicted by the same author when he asserts: “The parliament and the electoral system of the “partidocracia” (a pejorative form to refer to the party system), as we know them today, are controlled by the economic elites and won’t have a place in the future democracy. The same thing is valid for the great monopolies of the indoctrination (television, radio and press) and of production. The big private enterprise – which in organizational terms is a private tyranny with military structure – is incompatible with a real democracy and will vanish as so. And the State, as a class organisation, will go through the same pathway” (Idem).

In my opinion, this assertion is absolutely contradictory with the very principles of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, because, on the one hand, they say that the people should be sovereign and have spaces to participate and make decisions, and that this new democracy will be universal and inclusive of all citizens; whereas, on the other hand, they explicitly exclude big sections of the population, like the entrepreneurs, for example, and cut the spaces where people can express themselves and actively participate, like political parties, television, radio and press. Also, Dieterich recognizes that the Parliament currently is the institution that best represents the population and that their proposal of this new way of government will procure permanent participation through plebiscites and referenda; however he explicitly says that the parliament and the electoral system will not have place in the new democracy. Moreover, statements as those are not only confusing, but also dangerous: implementing such drastic reforms, instead of establishing a more just society, can not only give birth to the most basic and perverse form of populism; but what is worse, they open the doors for authoritarian regimes where opposition, antagonising and free thinking just simply have no place.
Authors like Carlos de la Torre have also noticed these contradictions and perils of this system, as noted in his article “In the Name of the People”:

These governments, on the one hand, are undermining the institutions that guarantee contestation, pluralism, and civil liberties. Power is concentrated in the executive, reducing the authority of counterbalancing powers. These regimes selectively deny the civil and political liberties of the opposition and of the privately owned media to express alternative points of view. Even though the electoral act is conceived as the ultimate expression of democratic legitimacy and elections are clean, the electoral playing field favours incumbents. On the other hand, these regimes foster the inclusion and participation of previously disempowered groups by redistributing income and reducing poverty. They increase citizen’s political participation by fostering referendums and other mechanisms of direct democracy. (De la Torre, 2013, p. 28)

In fact, De la Torre, Ernesto Laclau and Amy Kennemore, among others, agree that the countries that are implementing the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century have become populist regimes, with certain slight differences between them, but all resorting on the same tools for people’s inclusion, social participation via referenda, and, most of all, the same rhetorical style, which I will analyse in the third chapter in more detail.

A very valid question that arises in this moment is how could this apparently perfect and new model mutate into the most classical and basic form of populism? In his conference “Why Nazism was Socialism and Why Socialism is Totalitarian”, George Reisman explains that socialists regimes often turn out to become populists because the leaders of a socialist system are faced with a big dilemma, since they sold the idea to the people that “the socialism is the perfect system that only fails because of the interferences of mean people” (Reisman, G., 2005). Therefore, when it actually starts to fail, people tend to search for the mean people, and they start pointing at their leaders.
This is when these governments feel the need to rely on rhetoric to blame someone else and also to immediately distract the attention of the people from what goes wrong.

But we cannot state that these regimes are populists just because they resort on rhetoric tools to lead their people. There is much more in populism than mere rhetoric, so it’s worth studying what different authors understand as populism and then analysing if, in fact, these governments fit in that definition.

The term “populism” has been approached by many authors in many different ways. Because it has been present in many different scenarios and ideologies, it is difficult to find an accurate definition for it. Many authors like Gino Germani and Margaret Canovan, among others, have tried to find a definition by highlighting the things that populism is not, instead of defining what it is. As Ernesto Laclau has stated “populism, as a category of political analysis, confronts us with rather idiosyncratic problems. On the one hand it is a recurrent notion, one which is not only in widespread use – being part of the description of a large variety of political movements – but also one which tries to capture something about the latter which is quite central” (Laclau, E., 2005, p. 3).

Gino Germani (1978) argues that populism denies any identification with the classical dichotomy between the Right and the Left, because it usually is a multiclass movement, which doesn’t mean that all multiclass movements are populists. He stated that populism “includes socialist demands (or at least a claim for social justice), vigorous defence of small property, strong nationalist components, and denial of the importance of class. It is accompanied with the affirmation of the rights of the common
people as against the privileged interest groups, usually considered inimical to the people and the nation” (Germani, G., 1978, p. 88). Meanwhile, it combines these commonly known “socialist” demands with some sort of authoritarianism exercised by a charismatic leader, which is the reason why Germani concludes that it is not possible to identify populism with any given ideology, for it has elements of the Right as well as of the Left.

Peter Worsley (1969) argues three important things about populism: the first one is that ideological simplicity and emptiness should be approached in terms of what those processes of simplification and emptying attempt to perform, in other words, what is the social rationality they try to express; the second one, is that populism is not to be studied as a type of organization or ideology that could be compared with other types but as a “dimension of political culture which can be present in movements of quite different ideological sign” (Worsley, 1969, p. 229); and, the third assertion is that for populism in the third world countries, socio-economic classes are not the crucial social entities that they are in developed countries, which makes the argument of class struggle an irrelevant conception. This would mean that, according to him, populism has to be studied as a style of governing instead of as a type of government, and taking into account what the leaders mean to do through their governments, instead of trying to justify their actions on principles or ideologies or in the excuse of class struggle. In the author’s words, “Populism, then, would refer not only to ‘direct’ relationships between people and leadership (which must, inevitable, in any complex, large-scale society, be predominantly steer mystification or symbolism), but, more widely, to popular participation in general (including pseudo-participation)” (Worsley, 1969, p. 245-246).
As Ernesto Laclau has stated, “Populism is not a type of movement, but a political logic” (Laclau, 2005, p. 117)

Ernesto Laclau highlighted two pejorative propositions about populism: the first one, that populism is vague and indeterminate in the audience to which it addresses itself, in its discourse, and in its political postulates; and the second one, that populism is considered mere rhetoric. To these arguments, Laclau responds that, in the first case, “the vagueness and indeterminacy are not shortcomings of a discourse about social reality, but in some circumstances, inscribed in social reality as such”; and, for the second one, he says that “rhetoric is not epiphenomenal vis-à-vis a self-contained conceptual structure, for no conceptual structure finds its internal cohesion without appealing to rhetorical devices” (Laclau, 2005, p. 67). Which leads him to the conclusion that “populism is the royal road to understanding something about the ontological constitution of the political as such” (Idem).

According to Laclau, populism is constituted by three: discourse, empty signifiers and hegemony, and rhetoric. The first category, “discourse”, is not restricted to the delivery of speeches or the writing of political messages, but any complex elements where relations take place; for him discourse is the primary terrain of the constitution of objectivity.

The element of “rhetoric” is present, according to the author, not exclusively in populist regimes, because he argues that there is a rhetorical element every time a leader attempts to explain a concept that could not be explained except by the use of a figural term, constituting a catachresis. I will come back to this category in the third chapter.
The element of the “empty signifiers and hegemony” is the centre of Laclau’s theory on the emergence of populism. The author argues that “the hegemonic identity becomes something of the order of an empty signifier, its own particularity embodying an unachievable fullness. If society were unified by a determinate ontic content, the totality could be directly represented at the strictly conceptual level. Since this is not the case, a hegemonic totalization requires a radical investment and engagement in signifying games that are very different from purely conceptual apprehension” (Laclau, 2005, p. 69). In this sense, he says that this category has, on the one hand, the effect of determining the whole within differential identities that are being constituted; and, on the other, the centring effects that manage to constitute a precarious totalizing horizon that have to proceed from the interaction of the differences themselves. In other words, for Laclau populism arises from the necessity to take the universe of differences existing in a given society and bringing them together to conform a totality and, in this way, construct identity.

For the author, the “identification with an empty signifier is the sine qua non for the emergence of a “people”” (Laclau, 2005, p. 162). According to him, this empty signifier is generated by a lack of representation of the countries authorities and institutions, which he argues is the main ground to constitute social objectivity. He has stated, as central part of his theory, that “the construction of a “people” is the sine qua non of democratic functioning. Without production of emptiness there is no “people”, no populism, but no democracy either. If we add to this that the “people” is not essentially attached to any particular symbolic matrix, we will have embraced the problem of contemporary populism in all its true dimensions.” (Ib., p. 169)
Ernest Barker argues that the problem with representation is that there are two possible alternatives: “either the leader represents the will of his following, or the following represent the will of the leader” (Barker, quoted in Laclau, 2005, p. 157). Laclau, on the other hand, asserts that the representatives should not settle on transmitting the will of the represented, but they have to add something to those interests, meaning they should search for a greater benefit for their constituents. He agrees with Barker in that “representation is a two-way process: a movement form represented to representative, and a correlative one from representative to represented” (Laclau, 2005, p. 158), but he also adds an important assertion for his thesis, that “the represented needs the representative to form their identity” (Idem).

In synthesis, Laclau believes that populism is just one way in which the unity of a group can be constructed, and, therefore, it leads to the construction of an identity of “the people”. Taking this into account, he argues that populism is characterised by three main elements: an anti-institutional dimension, a general challenge to political normalization, and, most importantly, the appeal to those that have been or feel like they have been excluded from the political arena.

While Ernesto Laclau believes that populism comes as a response to the lack of representation of the institutions of a country and their failure to create a democratic culture and identity, Carlos de la Torre (2000) argues that, at least in Latin America, populism arises because the governments have privileged the political and social rights over the civil rights of the population. Thus, since the majority of the population don’t
have easy access to this type of rights, then the populist leaders emerge as messianic leaders that turn out to be the defenders of the underdog.

De la Torre (2000) agrees with Laclau and Worsley in saying that populism is a style of political mobilization, but he is explicit in arguing that it is based on strong rhetorical appeals to the people, and crowd action on behalf of a leader. He says that populism has to be studied through four variables: 1) a personalistic charismatic leadership; 2) a Manichaean discourse; 3) a political clientelism and patronage; and, 4) the social history of populism. Of these, the first three are, for De la Torre, constitutive elements of what we should understand by populism. For him, populism is mainly characterized by a strong rhetoric that radicalizes the emotional element that is present in all political discourses, and it constructs politics as a moral struggle between “the people” and “the oligarchy”, without accepting dialogue with the opponent. Likewise, populism is constructed on crowd action, meaning that it depends on the crowds to attend to mass meetings demanding political participation and incorporation to the political scene. In the words of the author, populism “is an interclass alliance based on charismatic political leadership; a Manichaean and moralistic discourse that divides society into el pueblo and oligarchy; clientelist networks that guarantee access to state resources; and forms of political participation in which public and massive demonstrations, the acclamation of leaders, and the occupation of public spaces in the name of a leader are perceived as more important than citizenship rights and the respect for liberal democratic procedures” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 4).

In what De la Torre disagrees with Laclau is in that he argues that Laclau’s theory about the necessity of building “the people” is missing something, because
identity is not constructed only by the use of discourse, it’s necessary to “take into account the conditions of production, circulation, and reception of political discourses” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 13). By this he meant that there are certain conditions that need to be met for the populist discourse to be favourably received, and, moreover, something deeper needs to happen for this type of regimes to succeed and sustain themselves in power.

It’s important to study the three main elements or characteristics that De la Torre considers to be constitutive of populism, being the first one the charismatic leadership. If populism stresses the idea of the confrontation between “the people” and the oligarchy, then charisma, for the author, is the identification of the leader with the people in their struggle against oligarchy. This kind of intimate relationship between the leader and the followers is achieved, according to De la Torre, by the performance of an extraordinary deed, which implies that he/she had to overcome rough obstacles to succeed, taking big risks, and making personal sacrifices in a disinterested way, all in the name of “the people”. They invoke myths and are assimilated to popular icons and, sometimes, they are even transformed into almost religious figures, as it happened to Eva Perón, “la santa peronista” (the peronista saint), in Argentina, or, to President Rafael Correa in Ecuador, a few days ago, when a group of evangelic people gathered together to “praise” him in the neighbourhood of Chimbacalle in Quito, after walking 1400 kilometres announcing his good deeds.\(^3\) But, foremost, charismatic leadership is about the personal attributes of the leader, who is presented as exactly what the people want.

\(^3\) This event was published in the official web site of the National Secretariat of Politics of Ecuador, as well as on their Twitter account, but had to be deleted soon after its publication because it generated adverse reactions in the people. A news article about it can be found in the following link http://www.ecuadorenvivo.com/politica/24-politica/19253-se-cumplio-jornada-de-alabanza-para-rafael-correa.html#.VAYOYv1SPvY Site accessed August 13th, 2014, 19h55. (Article in Spanish).
The Manichaean discourse explained by De la Torre constantly confronts the “people” with the oligarchy, the government with the opposition, and the “good” against the “evil”, according to the leader’s judgement. However, this element is the core topic of the third chapter, therefore for now I will skip it and continue with the study of the third element, and I will get back to it to fully analyse it further on.

Speaking about the mechanisms of political clientelism and patronage as a constitutive part of populism is referring to the mechanisms of electoral articulation, and the exchange of votes for goods and services is one of the keys for electoral success. However, let’s take into account the distinction made by Carlos Franco (1990) between what he called a “distributive populism”, which is the rational use of clientelism in terms of exchanging goods and services for people’s votes, a mechanism commonly used by most of the political parties; and an “identity populism”, which is the use of political rhetoric or discourse to give the poor and the excluded a sense of self-worth and recognition within a society that has never made them feel a part of the political arena. The latter is the kind of populism that is the subject of study in this dissertation and in most of the literature about the topic, for it is the one that combines all the rest of the elements that have been studied as constitutive of what we properly understand by “populism”.

That said, the context in which De la Torre refers to this mechanisms is that, even if charisma is a key feature for the emergence of a populist leader, it is more logical to explain winning votes through political clientelism. However, he also argues that the simple action of offering or giving something in exchange of votes doesn’t
guarantee success, which is why he asserts that it’s very important “to study not only the material features of the clientelist exchanges (what is given), but also the symbolic dimensions of exchanges (how it is given)” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 21). In this sense, the author explains that populist leaders appeal not only to the voters, but also to the restricted electorate, which means that both charisma and political clientelism have to be analysed in the way they work together on building electoral success. He argues that “the leader articulates values and challenges and creates new political languages. Political organizations, in turn, articulate strategies for electoral success, as well as creating mechanisms through which solidarities and collective identities are generated” (Idem).

Once the concept of populism has been thoroughly analysed, it is only natural to wonder how come this practice keeps re-emerging over and over again, especially in Latin America, a region that seems to be more vulnerable to its appearance than the rest of the world. I will attempt to clarify that phenomenon in the following chapter.
Chapter 2 - Latin America and Populism

Most of the authors that have addressed the phenomenon of populism have stated that it emerges as a response to some kind of crisis – political, economic, institutional, or identity crisis –. As has been stated before, Ernesto Laclau (2005) argues that populism emerges because of the need to construct an identity for the masses. He has stated that when people are insecure as a result of a crisis or war, when there are conflicts between classes, and when society appears to be fragmented, the result is the development of the fantasy of the “People-as-One”. Meanwhile, Carlos de la Torre has stated that “economic crises, change, insecurity, distrust in formal democracy that don’t deliver goods or exclude the “other” explain why populism constantly re-emerges” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 118). If we look at the history of Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century, in which most of the countries had to suffer at least one dictatorship and had to deal with all its consequences, then it’s only natural to understand the crises and instability that region had in terms of governance.

De la Torre (2000) also explains that, given the conditions of economic and social inequality in Latin America, the poor people are always in search of any kind of benefactor. They seek it in their employer, but since most of them are self-employed or the employers refuse to protect them, then they take on the refuge of the politician as their protector and, sometimes, even their saviour.

Moreover, since populism has a strong rhetorical resource and emotional appeal, leaders manipulate “available masses” that need to be integrated into the political system. In their discourse, populist leaders offer these masses their so desired protection
in exchange for their loyalty, but those speeches of love and friendship imply that the poor have to accept that love in the terms offered by the politician, even supporting them in illegitimate or illegal deeds. In this sense, Jesús Silva-Herzog argues that “the masses are emotional, impulsive, violent. They are inconsistent and irrational. They let themselves be led by charlatans and they don’t have the minimum sense of self-restrain” (Silva-Herzog, 2006. Original in Spanish).

Hanna Fenichel Pitkin (1967) argues that, in terms of popular representation, it doesn’t matter how the constituent is kept satisfied, as long as they feel represented. She says that it’s all about the creation of emotional loyalties and identification with the populist leader, and has nothing to do with the popular will. Nevertheless, since these leaders spend a lot of time with the poorest and the traditionally excluded, they claim to know exactly what their best interest is, and, at least in their discourse, that is what they promise to protect. And, that, according to Laclau (2005), is the moment of crystallization that constitutes “the people” of populism; “what was simply a mediation between demands now acquires a consistency of its own” (Laclau, 2005, p. 93).

Carlos de la Torre (2000) has highlighted that the common causes of Populism in Latin America are the poorly institutionalized and fragmented political systems, the proliferation of political parties, the new political parties and movements created as personal vehicles for certain candidates to win elections, and, most of all, the distrust of the citizens on politicians. These factors become very clear if we take a look at the case of Ecuador, where by 2006 “the high fragmentation of candidacies was in a certain way encouraged by the presence of upstarted groups and candidates who attempted to capitalise popular discontent. The electoral offer included ten political parties, thirty two
national movements and not less than a hundred and ten provincial movements” (Latinoamerica Libre. Original in Spanish). Actually, according to the at that time called Supreme Electoral Tribunal (today National Electoral Council) of Ecuador, by May 24th, 2007, their archives showed 11 registered political parties, 27 approved national political movements, 65 national political movements pending approval, 23 approved provincial political movements, and 82 provincial political movements pending approval (TSE, Dirección de Organizaciones Políticas. Original in Spanish).

It’s also important to highlight that in Ecuador, between 1996 and 2006, there were eight different presidents, and a brief Council of State, in only ten years, due to several consecutive overthrows of the governments. First, the government of Abdalá Bucaram in 1997, and his successor, Rosalía Arteaga, who only overtook the presidency for one day before being replaced by an interim President, Fabián Alarcón; then, the government of Jamil Mahuad, superseded on 2000 by a brief Council of State and then the Vice-president, Gustavo Noboa; and finally, the government of Lucio Gutierrez, substituted on 2005 by the Vice-president, Alfredo Palacio, until January 2007, when Rafael Correa Delgado took office as the new President of Ecuador. (Political Database of the Americas, Georgetown University)

Clearly, in such environments of instability and uncertainty, the people will need something different they can rely on. Amy Kennemore and Gregory Weeks have argued that in Latin America “prolonged political instability weakened traditional parties and created space for new political actors, who have gained overwhelming political support by adopting anti-establishment, anti-elite, anti-foreign messages that espouse a greater

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4 See more at http://www.latinoamericalibre.org/ecuador/sistema-de-partidos/
5 See more at http://www.puce.edu.ec/sitios/ocpal/images/documentos/TSE.pdf
6 See more at http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Executive/Ecuador/pres.html
role for the state to address the concerns of marginalised classes.” (Kennemore and Weeks, 2011, p. 267). Also, Carlos de la Torre has stated that “the electoral success of political mavericks is the result of a widespread sense of economic, political and ideological crises” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 112). These “new” politicians come forward to the political arena in a time when people are desperate for drastic changes, filling people’s minds with the idea that the crises are the politicians’ fault, therefore, only an outsider will be capable of solving them. Kenneth Roberts (1995) and Kurt Weyland (1996), among others have called these outsiders “neo-populists”.

De la Torre argued that “classical and contemporary Latin American populism is better understood as a political phenomenon. Populism is the result of a particular form of political incorporation of common people into the national community. This incorporation is based on a rhetoric that places the people at the centre of national life. The people represent the incarnation of the authentic nation that antagonistically confronts the oligarchy, which represents the foreign-dominated antination” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 141). In fact, this might be the most important factor for the proclivity of the region to succumb to this style of politics, especially when it comes to this new wave of populist leaders. Let’s not forget that the so-called Socialism of the Twenty-First Century preaches about an inclusive and participatory democracy as core element of the system.

De la Torre has stated in several of his books and articles that “perhaps the principal effect of populism has been the entrance of the masses into politics” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 26), or what Carlos Vilas has denominated the “fundamental democratizing force” of populism. This might be true and it has certainly been
demonstrated by examples as clear as the inclusion of the “descamisados” of Juan Domingo and Eva Perón in Argentina, or the “cocaleros” of Evo Morales, as central figures of their discourses.

And it has definitely gained force in Ecuador throughout the years in so far as the concept of “the people” has been changing: José María Velasco Ibarra’s concept of “the people” was the mestizos, therefore he didn’t include the indigenous, because he believed that in order to be considered part of the people, they needed to renounce to their “indigenousness” and become more mestizo (De la Torre, 2000), and also because of the literacy requirement for voting, Abdalá Bucaram didn’t include the indigenous either, because, being questioned about his Turkish roots and the origins of his campaign financial benefactors, he needed to be identified with the mestizos. On the contrary, Rafael Correa has constructed the concept of “the people” as the true struggle between the “pelucones” (pejorative word for the oligarchy) and “the others”, including everyone who, in his eyes, is not associated with the oligarchy. That’s the problem with Laclau’s construction of “the people”: it all depends on the circumstances of the moment and the arbitrary understanding and willingness of the leader. As De la Torre said: “because “el pueblo” is a rhetorical construction that doesn’t exist in reality, it could not be reduced to the interpretations of what constitutes its character according to the whims of the leader.” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 152)

Populism might seem extremely democratizing, but let’s have a closer look at what are the consequences of this apparently universal inclusion. It might be true that populist leaders are characterised by including the historically excluded, but they do this on behalf of the historically included. In other words, the inclusion is far from being
universal – as they are supposed to attempt, according to the very principles of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century – because while including the “underdog”, they exclude what they consider to be the oligarchy. Through their discourse, “populist leaders, the same as Marxists, use class struggle as tool: elite vs. poor, white vs. non-white” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 124).

In this context, it’s important to highlight what the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) said on 2008: “Democracies can survive only when those in power can lose power. That is, as Przeworski has stated, “democracy involves the institutionalization of uncertainty.”” (Seligson et al., 2008, p. 18). This means that for a true democracy to exist, there must be respect and political tolerance towards the rights of minorities and the opposition groups. Sadly, in the case of Ecuador, the LAPOP survey “found political tolerance to be extremely low, ranking in the bottom four of the countries considered, along with Honduras, Guatemala and Bolivia, respectively” (Kennemore and Weeks, 2011, p. 277).

Carlos de la Torre says that, according to Robert Dahl, democratization has two dimensions that could get into conflict: it “warrants contestation, understood as political competition and the possibility to criticize the government offering alternative points of view, while also promoting the participation and inclusion of citizens” (De la Torre, 2013, p. 29). In this sense, Dahl has stated that when a society has a high rate of socioeconomic exclusion, where an important amount of people cannot access their basic needs and their rights cannot be easily exercised, “this group will support more political participation at the cost of public contestation… [Therefore] scholars argue that
populism increases participation by the inclusion of marginalized groups in society, but limits (the possibilities for) contestation” (Idem).

In the different societies of Latin America, the recurrent presence of a sort of “favourite citizens” who enjoy all the privileges of the state, and sometimes are above the law, confronted with those who struggle to exercise their rights explain the persistent appearance of populist leaders. In the words of De la Torre, “the continuous distinction between common people, who are marginalized in their daily interactions and who are of the fringes of the rule of law, and a few citizens located above the law will continue to allow for the presence of populists politicians. Populism will continue to challenge closed versions of democracy by authoritarian means that will further weaken democratic institutions.” (De la Torre, 2000, p.153)

Taking into account the conception of democratization of Dahl, an important question arises: are the countries led by the populist leaders of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century true democracies? The answer is ambiguous, because these countries have free elections, and also there’s the factor of the universalization of political participation by including the historically excluded. However, the cost of this inclusion is the loss of the Rule of Law, of the balance of powers, and of government accountability, because populist leaders, when they win an election, “represent directly” the people’s will, or their personal interpretation of it, and “in the name of the people” they become arbitrary in their decisions and actions. But history has shown that “politicians’ appropriation of the people’s will has resulted in either Stalinist totalitarianism or populist authoritarianism” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 133).
In this sense, it is important to rescue what Marco Aponte-Moreno and Lance Lattig (2012) argue about Venezuela and Ecuador:

Chávez and Correa came to power through the ballot box… but upon taking office, [they] launched a process of drafting new constitutions, adopting a polarizing rhetoric, re-defining national symbols to break with the past, and gradually passing laws that concentrate power in the presidency… Chávez’s Venezuela and Correa’s Ecuador represent a new form of Latin American dictatorship – a type of illiberal democracy (as in Putin’s Russia or Berlusconi’s Italy) where media control, coupled with divisive and authoritarian rhetoric, have become central elements enabling their authors to remain in power. (Aponte-Moreno and Lattig, 2012, p. 36)

Similar affirmations are made by Kennemore and Weeks about Bolivia and Ecuador, when they argue that “in theory, [Morales and Correa] have successfully re-founded their countries with new constitutions that encompass the interests of all sectors of society. In practice, however, the reform process has often succumbed to traditional paradigms of the past… a volatile economic climate, poorly implemented reforms, increased opposition and low political tolerance all indicate limitations to the viability of twenty-first-century socialism as a post-neoliberal development model” (Kennemore and Weeks, 2011, p. 268). In other words, these populist regimes fall into irreconcilable contradictions: they procure a more participative and inclusive democracy, but they govern through undemocratic ways. This is better explained by De la Torre: “on the one hand, in the incorporation of people through the expansion of the vote and their presence in the public plazas, populism is democratizing. On the other hand, this popular activation occurs through movements that acritically identify with charismatic leaders, who in many cases are authoritarian.” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 26)

Both Laclau (2005) and De la Torre (2000; 2013) argue that populism needs to be studied by what it is instead of what it’s not, and Carlos Franco (quoted in De la
Torre, 2000, p.119) is right in saying that “those who want to transcend populism should start by accepting it”. They both agree that populists are both semi-authoritarian and semi-democratic, and it’s even harder to understand populism in Latin America, because many theorists argue that populism is a state of exception that comes with the crises and finishes with their end. However, in countries like Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia populism has been the norm rather than the exception (De la Torre, 2000). That is when the notions of De la Torre’s “available masses”, Silva-Herzog’s “emotional masses”, and Laclau’s “construction of identity”, become so important, even if this construction of “the people” becomes mere rhetoric.

But it’s important to recognize that “while the election of neopopulists is explained by emotional factors, their permanence in power depends on their achievements” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 128). Once again, if we look at the Ecuadorian example, this is widely demonstrated, for example, with the case of ex-President José María Velasco Ibarra, who was elected President five times (1934-1935, 1944-1946, 1952-1956, 1960-1961, 1968-1970), of which he only finished his constitutional mandate once (1952) (Avilés, 2014). Meanwhile, Rafael Correa Delgado was elected on 2006, taking office on 2007, and has won consecutive elections, being the President of Ecuador up to this date.

Both leaders are considered populist, however their success and permanence in power is completely different, mainly because of their deeds. Velasco Ibarra was an outstanding orator, famous for his quote “dadme un balcón en cada pueblo y yo seré presidente” (“give me a balcony in each town and I will be president), but was histrionic.
in his relationship with the people and with democracy itself, declaring himself dictator in most of his presidencial terms. The only term he completed was thanks to his Minister of Government and the government’s achievements in the realms of health, education, roads and culture; during his other presidencies he didn’t accomplish anything memorable (Idem). Meanwhile, Rafael Correa might have similar rhetoric, confronting the opposition and changing the legislation according to his will, but he has achieved many important things in the spheres of health, education, roads, culture, and social programmes, which explains his permanence in power.

Considering all that has been studied in this chapter, I believe it’s important to review the main features of this “neo-populism” of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century. The system in practice is characterised by: 1) a discourse in which “the people” and the oligarchy are confronted as the notions of good and evil; 2) the construction of a caudillo that people can relate to “as the symbol of redemption, whereas his enemies are created as the embodiment of all the problems of the nation; he asks the led to believe in his honesty and commitment to the people and the homeland” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 140); 3) new political movements as coalitions of excluded groups as “new elites” or the centre of attention of their discourse; and, 4) semi-democratic, semi-authoritarian governance, in which the inclusion of the historically excluded and the disrespect for the liberal-democratic norms and procedures enter into irreconcilable contradiction.

Summarizing, the recurrent phenomenon of populism in Latin America and the appearance of these “neo-populist” leaders is explained by long periods of political, economic, and institutional instability and crisis, the distrust of people in the democratic
practices and democracy itself, and social inequality, all of which make people become irrational and desperate in the search for something or someone that can help them reach a better life. In the words of Carlos de la Torre “Unless personalized relations of domination are altered and citizens begin to be considered as individuals with rights and duties, authoritarian populist politics will continue to re-emerge in Latin America. The populist temptation will be present as long as the poor continue to live in a ‘régime d’exception’… It will persist as long as class differences also become estate differences between common citizens without rights and privileged groups, who are above the law” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 137).
Chapter 3 – Rhetoric and its Importance for the Populist Regimes. The Ecuadorian Case

Ernesto Laclau, Carlos de la Torre, Amy Kennemore, and all the authors who have studied the phenomenon of populism, agree in its strong rhetorical appeal, both in the speeches and propaganda used by its leaders. In order to understand what they are talking about, I believe it’s important to understand what rhetoric is and what elements constitute a good use of it, before going deeper in the use of these tools within populist regimes. In this chapter, I will combine the theoretical framework with the empirical evidence found in the speeches of Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, rhetoric is “The art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the exploitation of figures of speech and other compositional techniques”\(^8\). In simple words, rhetoric could be defined as the power of persuasion through the use of language. Most people tend to think of rhetoric as a tool only used by politicians, which is why normally there is a tendency to look at it as a deceiving weapon used to achieve immoral and selfish objectives. Actually, since ancient times, there has been a debate between the defenders of rhetoric and the defenders of moral; the previous arguing that rhetoric is just a tool to better communicate something, whereas the latter argue that there are universal values and principles that are violated by the use of rhetoric, when someone can convince an audience that a lie is the reality (Toye, 2013).

\(^8\) [http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rhetoric?q=rhetoric](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/rhetoric?q=rhetoric)
Rhetoric has been used throughout all ages, and for many different purposes. However, it’s important to highlight that political rhetoric in modern times, according to Richard Toye (2013), gained importance with the two world wars. It’s especially remarkable to notice that Stalin was one of the first leaders to take rhetoric seriously, carefully writing his own speeches, because of his strong belief that “correct linguistic choices had the capacity to shape external reality” (Toye, 2013, p. 89). Hitler was another leader that gave great importance to rhetorical practices, although he didn’t settle just with a good construction of a speech, but he gave great relevance to a good delivery of the message, and also, “to a considerable extent [he] relied on propaganda minister Josef Goebbels to do his sloganizing”. No matter if they agreed or disagreed with him, “the German people had a hunger to hear from Hitler” (Idem).

A similar phenomenon happens now in Latin America in countries like Cuba, and the ones ruled by the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century. Fidel Castro mastered the art of rhetoric and, after several decades of dictatorship, people are still thrilled by his speeches. It happened to Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, who even had his own talk show “Aló Presidente”, broadcasted in radio and television, and who’s total number of hours spoken “in the cadenas and in his weekly TV and radio show since his arrival to power in 1999 [until 2012] adds up to one whole year of nonstop broadcasting” (Aponte-Moreno and Lattig, 2012, p. 35). And it’s certainly happening up to this day to Rafael Correa in Ecuador, who handles rhetoric in such a way that people are eager to listen to him, and him, as did Hitler in his time, also relies considerably on his star publicists, Vinicio and Fernando Alvarado, in charge of slogans and propaganda.
Aristotle distinguished three different kinds or genres of rhetoric, rescued by Richard Toye (2013): deliberative, forensic or judicial, and epideictic rhetoric. The first one, referring to the rhetoric used in a typical political speech, meant to persuade an audience on accepting the message that is being transmitted. Forensic or judicial rhetoric is the one typically used by Lawyers to convince a judge or jury about their argument. And epideictic rhetoric is the one used to praise or blame someone or something, as we can see in the kind of speeches given at funerals.

Also, according to Aristotle, there are three different appeals in rhetoric, crucial in order to understand the effectiveness of its use: ethos, or the appeal to the character of the one who is delivering the speech; pathos, or the appeal to the emotions or the passions of the audience to whom the message is delivered; and, logos, or the appeal to the logic of the message itself (Toye, 2013). Let’s have a look at how they are used in practice in Rafael Correa’s first inaugural speech on 2007:

“More than 50 years ago, when our country was devastated by war and chaos, the great Benjamín Carrión expressed the necessity of “having a Homeland again”. This phrase was the inspiration for (us) a handful of citizens that decided to get free from the groups that have kept the Homeland hostage, and start the struggle for a Citizen Revolution, consisting on a radical, profound and fast change in the current political, economic and social system; perverse system that has destroyed our democracy, our economy, and our society.

Thus, we began this crusade called “Alianza PAIS”, more than with a campaign slogan, with one hope: the Homeland Returns, and, with it, return the jobs, returns the justice, return the millions of brothers and sisters expelled from their own land in that national tragedy called migration…

… The political institutions of Ecuador have collapsed, sometimes because of their anachronistic and outdated design, others due to the claws of corruption and the political voracities…” (Correa, 2013a. Original in Spanish)

In these short initial paragraphs we have plenty of material to analyse in accordance with the first considerations about rhetoric. First of all, let’s see what kind of rhetoric is being used. We can see that he begins by using epideictic rhetoric, when he praises the greatness of one of the best writers, diplomats and politicians of Ecuador, Benjamín Carrión, transmitting the underlying message that he was brave enough to take the challenge of working to reconstruct a country destroyed by war. Then he goes on using a mixture of deliberative and forensic rhetoric, intending to convince people that his so-called “Citizen Revolution” is the only way to “have Homeland again”. Later on, following this preamble, he makes this statement: “The fundamental instrument for this change is the Constitutional National Assembly. In a few minutes … I will call for the referendum for the sovereign, the Ecuadorian people, to order or deny that Constitutional National Assembly…” (Idem).

Also, we can see how brilliantly he uses the three different appeals. First, he appeals to his own character (ethos) and that of the ones who surround him: after the underlying message of the greatness and courage of Benjamín Carrión, his says that Carrión’s phrase was “the inspiration for (us) a handful of citizens that decided to get free from the groups that have kept the Homeland hostage”. He is comparing himself with that icon: as Carrión rescued the country from chaos, he is the one capable to rescue the country from the “evil” people that have, in his eyes, “destroyed our democracy, our economy, and our society”.

He appeals to the emotions of the people too (pathos), by the very use of the symbol that a national hero as Benjamín Carrión represents. But also, when he speaks of
the crusade they initiated with their hope (and the hope of all those who trusted them) that “the Homeland returns”. He appeals to the passions of the people by talking to them about the most crucial preoccupations: jobs, justice and migration, as shown in the second paragraph of his speech. His campaign slogan, “La Patria Vuelve” (“the Homeland Returns”, included in his speech), also calls for the rise of people’s emotions, because it gives them hopes and expectations that they will finally be saved from the chaos of the past. But then, just one paragraph later he makes the statement that would become the milestone of his government’s new motto: “Today, THE HOMELAND ALREADY BELONGS TO EVERYONE” (“La Patria ya es de Todos”. Idem). This new slogan, in my opinion, is the most emotional of all the ones used during his seven years of government, because it created a feeling of belonging, of identity; the traditionally excluded were finally, after too long, included in the political, economic, and social arena of the country, if only just in discourse.

And finally, he becomes a sort of lecturer appealing to logic (logos) and explaining why his proposal of the Citizen Revolution and the Constitutional National Assembly are crucial to solve the problems of the country. He explains that “the political institutions of Ecuador have collapsed” because of the use of political practices of the past that are not valid for the present moment, but also because the previous governments have been corrupted.

But rhetoric in populism is not always this charming. Emilio De Ípola (1979), when speaking about Peronismo, stated that the political discourse had three main characteristics: 1) a thematic focused on the problem of the control of the institutional structures of the state; 2) it’s polemic, meaning that its objective is to refute and
disqualify the opposing discourse 3) it includes the calculation and evaluation of its immediate ideological and political results. This means that, in order for a speech to be successful, it’s not enough to construct a good message, but also to think about who is going to receive it: the type of audience to whom the leader will address. As Toye stated, “however skilful the individual speaker, the multiplicity of audiences meant that the consequences of a particular speech could rarely be foreseen” (Toye, 2013, p. 86).

Let’s see how this applied to Rafael Correa in one of his interventions. On September 30, 2010, there was a revolt at the Police Regiment “Quito No.1”; the members of the police were protesting against a new law that presumably cut his social security benefits. Correa decided to personally handle the problem and went to the regiment to try and calm the police forces. He appeared through a window of a high floor of the building and started giving a speech10, but his usual rhetoric wasn’t well received by his audience (De la Torre, 2013b). “Believe me, of every other institution I would expected this, but not from the National Police. Let’s have memory about how the oligarchy destroyed the National Police. (Addressing to a single individual) Hey, if you are a public servant, at least respect your President. What a shame! […] Put yourself the Homeland in your heart! We are fighting for the common wealth! I never expected this from one of the institutions we have treated the best” (Extracted from the original speech in Spanish). This speech only got the audience angrier than they already were. Finally the President lost his temper and, opening his tie and shirt, shouted to them: “You want to kill the President? Here he is! Kill me if you want! Kill me if you have the power! Kill me if you have the courage!” This speech was the cause of the tragic events of that day, which many have called an attempt of coup d’État, even if it

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10 Full video of the speech can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ogXc9eKzk6s
really wasn’t, but that ended up in an armed battle between supporters and opposition, with many people killed and injured.

Mario Vargas Llosa described the populist rhetoric in the following way:

The politician goes up onto the platform to charm, to seduce, to lull, to bill and coo. His musical phrasing is more important than his ideas, his gestures more important than his concepts. Form is everything: it can either make or destroy the content of what he says. The good orator may say absolutely nothing, but he says it with style. What matters to his audiences is for him to sound good and look good. The logic, the rational order, the consistency, the critical acumen of what he is saying generally get in the way of his achieving that effect, which is attained above all through impressionistic images and metaphors, ham acting, fancy turn of phrase, and defiant remarks. The good Latin American political orator bears a much closer resemblance to a bullfighter or a rock singer than to a lecturer or a professor; his communication with the audience is achieved by way of instinct, emotion, sentiment, rather than by way of intelligence. (Vargas Llosa, quoted in De la Torre, 2000, p. 14)

I believe this description is the most accurate one, because it explains exactly how these caudillos behave and how their followers react to their charisma. Also, by the use of TV, as Pierre-André Taguieff argued, politicians are presented as spectacle, and “citizens are reduced to spectators, mere consumers of spectacles (Taguieff, quoted in De la Torre, 2000, p. 121). But it’s important to rescue what their messages transmit as well. As it was stated in previous chapters, populist leaders make the people feel like they are part of something, therefore people can identify with them. But they also have the power to create a discourse of dichotomies, which in environments of crises such as the ones that have been analysed before, are well received by the “underdog”.

These dichotomies between “good and evil”, and, especially between the “bad practices” of the past and the “great actions” of the present, in the case of Correa, make
the insults from the leader towards the opposition a main characteristic of their discourse:

A country that in ten years had seven presidents, and they told us we were ungovernable… The Revolution has gotten tired of winning elections and has demonstrated that the Ecuadorian people are perfectly governable when they are governed by people like them: straightforward, working, honest, patriots, and not the usual phonies, the traitors, the submissive. (Correa, 2014b. Original in Spanish)\(^{11}\)

As De la Torre argued, “instead of recognizing the adversary, accepting diversity, and proposing dialogue – implying conflict but not the destruction of rivals – populists through their discourse seek the destruction of opponents and impose their authoritarian vision of the “true” national community” (De la Torre, 2000, p. 27). Let’s take a look at this practice in Correa’s speech of January, 2014: “There comes the most recalcitrant, the most cavernous Right, to speak to us about “successful models”, because for them success is only for the “buddies”; let them not lack anything and, if there’s anything left: for the poor. Not one new school for Guayaquil or Quito in the last 30 years. And they call that “successful models”” (Correa, 2014b).

The leaders of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century have been characterised also by their strong anti-American rhetoric. “Anti-American rhetoric has existed in Latin America since the 19\(^{th}\) century… In recent years, populist politicians have adopted this rhetoric to mobilize electoral support in their countries. This is the case of Chávez and his allies – Rafael Correa in Ecuador, Evo Morales in Bolivia, and Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua” (Aponte-Moreno and Lattig, 2012, p. 40):

We got our sovereignty back in the management of the international and regional policy. Never again will Ecuador be somebody’s colony! Never again will Ecuador be the backyard of hegemonic countries! We are a small country, but proud, and we will exercise our international policy with sovereignty, with dignity, without having to ask for no one’s permission to take the decisions that the country requires... Do you remember how the National Social Security Institute was? Financing foreign countries, sending our savings to Florida, transferring Ecuadorian resources to more developed countries...” (Correa, 2013a. Original in Spanish)\textsuperscript{12}

Another characteristic of the populist rhetoric is the strong use of symbolisms, metaphors and language commonly used by regular people. As Aponte-Moreno and Lattig stated, the leaders of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, following the example of Fidel Castro, “use words and phrases that gives their rhetoric a tone of familiarity; and [they] refer often to historical figures to legitimize their projects” (Aponte-Moreno and Lattig, 2012, p. 34). Thus, as Castro relies on the figure of José Martí, and Chávez speaks of Bolivar, Correa resorts on the figure of ex-President Eloy Alfaro Delgado, considered “the best Ecuadorian” according to a survey made in 2005 by the national TV channel Ecuavisa\textsuperscript{13}. It’s important to notice that Eloy Alfaro is also Correa’s ancestor, which gives the symbol a bigger weight: “Six years ago Bolívar and Alfaro woke up to give our people hope again” (Correa, 2013a. Original in Spanish). “You, General Eloy Alfaro Delgado, are alive, you are part of our future of dignity. With you the Homeland comes back. With you we are making of this revolution something that nothing or no one will be able to stop... Ever onward to victory, General of free men! Viva Alfaro! Viva Quito! Viva the Homeland! Viva our Latin America!” (Correa, 2012e. Original in Spanish)\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Full speech can be found in http://www.presidencia.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/01/2013-01-12-6RC.pdf

\textsuperscript{13} http://www.hoy.com.ec/noticias-ecuador/eloy-alfaro-designado-el-mejor-ecuatoriano-219622.html

\textsuperscript{14} Full speech can be found in http://www.presidencia.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/2012-01-28-Discurso-en-los-100-aos-de-la-Hoguera-Barbara-El-Ejido.pdf
However, the success of these caudillos does not only rest on what they say, but more importantly on how they say it. I have already stressed the importance about knowing how to address the different audiences, but it’s also about a corporal language. Carlos de la Torre (2000) said that Menem, in Argentina, imitating the style of Pope John Paul II, used to visit common people in their daily activities and their neighbourhoods, blessing and kissing children. The same thing can be said about Correa. He visits every single town and neighbourhood of the country, accompanied by his “itinerant cabinet”, personally supervising the government projects and talking to the people. Then every Saturday he has a “cadena” called “Enlace Ciudadano” (“Citizen Link”), similar to Chávez’s “Aló Presidente” in which he gives his public report of his weekly activities, including where he had breakfast, what food he had for dinner (always some typical dish in a popular street place)\(^{15}\), and the people that he met, with full name and description. These are the main reasons why populist leaders get the people to feel identified with them.

I don’t pretend to say that relating to the people like this is a bad practice, on the contrary, I believe it’s valid that the president knows his own country on a first-hand basis. However, this can become a dangerous practice, because the people tend to think that the President is the solution for everything and they won’t trust any other authority to take care of their problems. Aponte-Moreno and Lattig analysed this effect about Chávez saying that “Chávez’s discourse is not only authoritarian, but can be dictatorial in the literal sense. What he says – no matter how ill conceived or unthinkingly expressed – is quickly implemented, even if it violates basic democratic principles such

\(^{15}\) A sample video of these practices can be found in https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqnbWt8VwF4
as the separation of powers” (Aponte-Moreno and Lattig, 2012, p. 37). The same thing has happened more than once in Ecuador. As an example, Correa said that he thought that the media journalists had to be legally prosecuted because “media lynching” should be considered a felony. A couple of months later, in June 2013, the Legislative reformed the Communication Law, and recently the new Penal Code too, to include, among others, a new type of felony called “media lynching” (BBC Mundo, 2012). And now, after losing a lot of power in the last sectional elections of January 2014, he proposed to modify the Constitution created by his government that, according to him, was supposed to last for 300 years, in order to have to possibility of indefinite re-election (El Universo, 2014). The Legislative has accepted and are close to approve it, endangering the concept of democracy, and the very ideals of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century.

To conclude, I think it’s important to highlight what Ernesto Laclau (2005) said, that rhetoric, far from being a parasite of ideology, can be actually considered the anatomy of the ideological world. However, as George Orwell said in his book 1984, “But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought.” (Orwell, 1949)

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16 Complete news article can be found at http://www.bbc.co.uk/mundo/noticias/2013/06/130614_ecuador_aproaba_ley_comunicacion_msd.shtml
CONCLUSION

For almost two decades, the world has seen the rise of the “new Left” in several governments in Latin America. Four particular countries – Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Nicaragua – have defined themselves as followers of the so-called Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, a theory created by Heinz Dieterich, and enforced by Hugo Chávez himself. This dissertation has studied thoroughly the phenomenon of the transition of this supposedly new Socialism towards simple and basic populism, and the importance that rhetoric has in these type of regimes. In doing so, three core elements of study can be identified throughout the document: the conception of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, the definition of Populism, and the study of effective rhetoric.

The first chapter has shown us that, what started as a new economic model, later on had to be developed as a regime, combining the economic and the political spheres into some new way of government. In this sense, Heinz Dieterich built his theory on four basic institutions: Regional democratic developmentalism, an equivalence economy based in units of value instead of the price system, a participative democracy, and the creation of grassroots organisations.

As can be seen, the first two constitute the economic model that was supposed to get rid of the capitalist and neoliberal ways to establish the new socialism. The system was supposed to change the balance of economic power to stop Latin America from being mere suppliers of raw material and consumers of manufactured products. It also was supposed to end with the price system and transform itself into an economy in which the trade would consist in the equivalence of values, understood as the number of
hours that took someone to produce something. Almost two decades have passed since Chávez, the pioneer, began his government in Venezuela, and so far none of these changes in the economy have taken place. The market system is still working as always, the only difference is that the state has higher control of it.

Participative democracy and the creation of grassroots organisations constitute the political sphere of the system. Dieterich distinguishes three types of democracy: social, referring to the provision of material welfare; formal, denoting the group of institutions that make a state and a government function, including accountability and the Rule of law; and participative, which denies the previous ones and proclaims democracy as the real capacity of the majorities to decide over public affairs. This new socialism defends participatory democracy as its cornerstone, with the argument that in formal democracy, people are only included periodically when there’s an election, whereas in this one they are included frequently through their participation in referendums. I strongly disagree with this statement because a democracy is much more than voting, and there are several ways to participate without the necessity of calling for a referendum on a given subject.

Nevertheless, Dieterich strongly attacks the figures of Parliament, the current party system, the media, and the state as class organisation. This represents a contradiction in his own theory, because on the one hand he defends the active and frequent participation of people, but on the other hand he attacks the spaces for people to do so. As Carlos de la Torre (2013) stated, this type of socialism fosters the inclusion and participation of the excluded, encouraging direct democracy, while undermining the elements of contestation, pluralism, civil liberties, and counterbalancing of powers.
These leaders support their actions by arguing they are acting in the name of “the people”, a rhetorical construction that depends on the subjective understanding of the one that uses it. And that’s when they begin to mutate from socialists to mere populists.

This transition is given, according to George Reisman, because the leaders sell the idea that socialism is the perfect system that can only fail because of the intervention of mean people; which is why, when the system actually fails, they rely in populist tools as rhetoric to cover their mistakes and make people blame someone else instead of them. But populism is more than just rhetoric, and it actually has nothing to do with Right or Left. Gino Germani (1978) said that it’s a multiclass movement, while Ernesto Laclau (2005) argued that populism, far from being a type of government, is a style of governing.

Different authors have approached the concept of populism and its causes. While Laclau (2005) says it has its origins in the lack of representation and the need to construct an identity for the people, De la Torre (2000) argues that it’s because the governments privilege the political and social rights instead of the civil rights, and, as a wide section of the population don’t have access to these rights, then they become the underdog that the populist leader appeals to.

The case of Latin America deserves a close look because of the region’s vulnerability to this kind of governments. The general agreement on the rise of populism is that it happens during periods of institutional, political, social, or economic crisis, and that, when the crisis is over, so is populism. But in Latin America populism has been the rule rather than the exception, because of its persistent instability, the lack
of trust in the political parties and in democracy, and the high rates of inequality among
the population. All of these factors contribute to the birth of what De la Torre (2000)
has called “available masses”, capitalized by outsiders presented as saviours.

De la Torre (2000) also argues that populism has three main characteristics that
need to be studied in order to understand the phenomenon: 1) a personalistic charismatic
leader or “caudillo”; 2) a Manichaean discourse that builds on dichotomies: good vs.
evil, people vs. oligarchy, past vs. present, etc.; and, 3) political clientelism and
patronage. Of this, perhaps the most important one is the use of rhetoric, for this is the
way in which the caudillo relates to the followers and the latter identify themselves with
the previous. But, even if rhetoric is crucial to these leaders, according to De la Torre,
they only sustain themselves in power because rhetoric is accompanied by their
accomplishments.

Although rhetoric has been used since ancient times, it has gained importance
with the world wars. Especially remarkable is the importance that rhetoric had to Stalin,
who wrote his own speeches seeking perfection, and Hitler, who also gave great
importance to the delivery of the messages and to propaganda, strongly relying on
Joseph Goebbels, in charge of sloganizing.

This dissertation has the speeches of Rafael Correa Delgado, President of
Ecuador, as case study to demonstrate how rhetoric is used as fundamental tool of the
governments of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century. Through them I have shown
how the three different types of rhetoric identified by Aristotle (deliberative, forensic or
judicial, and epideictic) can be employed to achieve epic reactions in an audience. I
have also analysed the different appeals a speech can have to get through to the people: appeal to the character of the orator (*ethos*), appeal to the passions or emotions of the people (*pathos*), and the appeal to logic (*logos*). Correa combines all of these elements to perfection, in such a way that, when the audience is right, his speeches are received with exultation, and people have true hunger of listening to him.

But I have also demonstrated the importance of knowing the audience and how to address them in their particularities. An inappropriate selection of words that is incompatible with the given audience may result in disaster and chaos, as it happened to Rafael Correa on September 30, 2010, when his speech transformed a police revolt into a battlefield, with fatal consequences.

Emilio De Ípola (1979) describe populist discourse’s main characteristics: 1) its thematic is the control of the institutional structure of the state; 2) it’s polemical, intended to refute and disqualify the opposition; and 3) it calculates the immediate ideological and political results. However, other authors such as Laclau, De la Torre, Aponte-Moreno and Lattig, have identified other common characteristics of the populist leaders of the Socialism of the Twenty-First Century, such as the strong anti-American rhetoric, the use of symbols, metaphors, and easy language, and the intention of their discourse to destroy the opposition, presented as “enemy”. All of these features were demonstrated empirically with the passages of Correa’s speeches selected and included in the third chapter of this dissertation.

I have stressed the importance that the body language has for these leaders in order to connect with the people. They behave in such a way that are seen more like
movie stars and, in some cases, almost religious figures, and this is enhanced by the use of the media, especially television. But also because they literally get close to the people, by visiting them in their towns and villages, in their daily activities and even eating with them, which creates almost a link of love between the leader and the followers.

The danger of this strong link is that it gives the leaders such a power that it's almost incontrollable. They can get away with illegal or illegitimate deeds because the people support them. They can hide their authoritarian ways behind the argument that they won the elections with the favour of the majority of the population. And with the use of rhetoric, they can get that majority to see the opposition as the enemies of “the people’s interests”.

Nevertheless, populism in the countries of Latin America will continue to be a constant temptation, as long as the high rates of political, social and economic inequality subsist. Without strong institutions, high accountability, full enjoyment of rights, and public policies that ensure the access to equal opportunities for the population, there will always be “available masses” for these rhetorical masters to take advantage of.
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