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## Can the Governance Paradigm survive the rise of Populism?

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<b>Abstract:</b>	The governance paradigm has provided a dominant way of thinking about how to govern and found reflection in practice with the increased use of partnerships, networks, and markets to deliver public services and programmes. The emergence of populism as a political force, however, calls into question the thinking behind the governance paradigm and some of its favoured tools for governing. Populism sees the task of governing in very different terms to that of the advocates and practitioners of governance. This article explores the populist challenge to governance. It shows that gaps in its analysis of a changed environment left the governance paradigm potentially open to populist attack. It explores how the governance paradigm might adapt to survive by developing either a more technical or political dynamic to its presentation.
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## Introduction

1  
2 The governance paradigm that came to the fore from the 1980s onwards reflected a sense  
3  
4 that the conditions for governing in contemporary democratic states were undergoing some  
5  
6 profound changes. The altered governing context was conditioned by an increased impact  
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8 from globalised forces of economic and social change, the development of new demands  
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10 internally on nation states driven by new social divisions, the influence of more demanding  
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12 citizens and the rise of seemingly more intractable policy challenges (see Peters and Pierre,  
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14 2016). The solution frame that the governance paradigm fitted into called on governments to  
15  
16 steer others rather than act directly themselves. As Kjaer (2004:7) notes ‘governance refers  
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18 to something broader than government, and it is about steering and rules of the game’. In the  
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20 domestic context, which is the focus of attention in this article, governance is associated with  
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22 public service reforms and new forms of citizen engagement that focus on “what works” and  
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24 go beyond the traditions of representative democracy to construct networks of deliberation  
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26 around policy issues (Stoker, 2006).  
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34 The emergence of the theory and practice of governance has been the focus of multifaceted  
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36 developments (Chhotray and Stoker, 2009) but at its heart the new wave of governance  
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38 studies that has emerged over three decades or more ago share a core concern with ‘new  
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40 theories and practices of governing and the dilemmas to which they give rise’ and explores  
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42 governing approaches that place ‘less emphasis on hierarchy and the state, and more on  
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44 markets and networks’ (Bevir, 2011:1). In contrast to formal instruments of lawmaking and  
45  
46 governmental control the focus is on interactive governance and the way that multiple actors -  
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48 notwithstanding differences of interest and values – work together to produce policy and  
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50 implementation outcomes (Torfing et al, 2012). There remain some substantial schisms in the  
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52 literature - some of which will be explored later- but for the purposes of this argument the  
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1 focus is on the shared components of a mainstream governance paradigm that sets out to  
2 reframe the task of governing in contemporary democracies.  
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5 The governance paradigm engaged both the worlds of practice and academic research. As  
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7 Rhodes (2007:1258) puts it the narrative of changed governance ‘is not just a story that  
8 academics tell to one another’. The governance debate shaped to a degree the way that  
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10 political and official elites understood the task of governing. It encouraged the use of new  
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12 policy tools: networks and markets. Moreover, this new style of governing ‘is thought by its  
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14 advocates to be more democratic for some of the same reasons that it is considered more  
15  
16 effective’ (Torfing et al, 2012:3). Bringing different interests together creates both the  
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18 conditions for improved democratic engagement and better policy outcomes because of the  
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20 creativity and learning opportunities thereby created. Governance can offer a depth to  
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22 democracy in practice beyond that provided by periodic elections and the authority of  
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24 representative government. Such claims, however, are tempered by the caveat that there may  
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26 be an issue about the range and variety of interests brought into these governance networks  
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28 (see Sorensen and Torfing, 2005; Klijn and Skelcher, 2007).  
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38 The argument of this article is that the governance paradigm is under threat from the rise of  
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40 populism. Populism as a political force has moved from a sideshow in contemporary  
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42 democracies to the centre stage. In Europe, much of the impact of populism has been through  
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44 parties that have been set up to challenge the mainstream parties. The pattern is roughly that  
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46 of right-wing-oriented populism doing better in Northern Europe and left-leaning populism  
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48 finding expression in Southern Europe. By 2015 a populist party had gained at least 10 per  
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50 cent of voting support in twenty European countries. In five they had become the largest  
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52 party: Greece, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, and Switzerland. And in several countries populist  
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54 parties have become the government or entered government coalitions (Mudde, 2016; 2017).  
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59 Beyond Europe, there is plenty of evidence of the impact of populism on politics (Müller,  
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1 2017). Pauline Hanson in Australia founder of the One Nation party carries the flag of  
2 populism. Former UKIP leader Nigel Farage is widely seen as a populist politician. The 2016  
3  
4 Brexit vote in the UK was can be seen as driven by a populist politics. The successful  
5  
6 election campaign in 2016 for the USA Presidential office by Donald Trump has the  
7  
8 hallmarks of a populist tilt at mainstream politics. Jeremy Corbyn's unsuccessful but much  
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10 better than predicted campaign for the Labour Party in the 2017 UK general election is  
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12 attributed by some to his turn to a populist framing of the issues (Flinders, 2018). There are  
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14 few contemporary democracies that remain untouched by the dynamics of populism.  
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20 The indirect and potentially direct challenges that populism provides to governance form the  
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22 core focus of this article. Populism poses a profound threat to the assumptions of the  
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24 governance paradigm and its claim to identify new practices of governing fitted to the needs  
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26 of the twenty first century. Populist thinking rejects the understanding of how governing  
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28 works that lies at the heart of the governance paradigm and the logic of populist thought is  
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30 hostile towards two of the favoured instruments of the paradigm: the greater use of markets  
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32 and networks on governing. Before addressing these issues, the article lays out, in  
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34 introductory sections, the defining features of the governance paradigm and the emergent  
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36 populist politics. The concluding section turns on two vexed questions. To what extent is the  
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38 governance paradigm implicated in its own demise and of how might it, if at all, respond to  
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40 populism.  
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### 47 **The rise of the governance paradigm**

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51 The governance paradigm identified a range of trends in practices of governing. The first is  
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53 the de-centring of public power away from centralised nation states and towards the local,  
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55 regional, and transnational levels (Bang, 2003). It also attested to the emergence of new  
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57 governing tools based on market-style practices, the greater use of networks involving  
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1 intensive interactions between public and private actors and the greater use of persuasion and  
2 behaviour change measures targeted at citizens (Bell and Hindmoor, 2009; Bell et al, 2010).

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4 Hierarchy or government command and control was not an entirely abandoned tool and its  
5 shadow was seen as an ever present (Pierre and Peters, 2000; Torfing et al, 2012; Peters and  
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7 Pierre, 2016 ) but there was a shift in focus from strong forms of regulation to more soft-law  
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9 or enabling practices that relied on voluntary cooperation from relevant stakeholders rather  
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11 than direct enforcement by government (Salamon, 2000).

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17 As it unfolded the governance paradigm had embedded within it assumptions about the  
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19 nature and character of governing. These were:

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23 1. *The assumption of interdependence based on the mutual need of diverse social actors*  
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25 *to work with one another.*

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28 One of the clearest statements of this position is Rhodes (2007: 1244-5) who argues that ‘the  
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30 roots of the idea of policy networks lie not only in the political science literature on  
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32 intergovernmental relations but also in the interorganizational analysis literature....To this  
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34 day, exchange theory lies at the heart of policy network theory’. Two core premises are that  
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36 ‘any organization is dependent upon other organizations for resources’ and that in ‘order to  
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38 achieve their goals, the organizations have to exchange resources’. These arguments are  
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40 developed further in the literature on governance network theory and the idea of New Public  
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42 Governance. As Klijn and Koppenjan (2012: 4) put it a shared core assumption of that  
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44 research is that ‘(p)olicy and service delivery is formed and implemented in a network of  
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46 interdependent actors’. The idea is also embedded in work on collaborative governance seen  
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48 as a strategy for governing that rests on bringing together public and private actors to build  
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50 common goals through face-to-face exchanges, building trust and developing commitment,  
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often through building on incremental achievements (Ansell and Gash, 2008).

Interdependence provides the bedrock on which greater collaboration can grow.

2. *A second assumption of the governance paradigm looks to the reconstitution of actors and the building of new identities to express mutuality and solidarity.*

Governance solutions mould together actors creating new identities. The interaction goes beyond exchange 'it is deeper and... refers to the constitution and reconstitution of actors or entities' (Kooiman, 2003:211). Governance creates partnerships, networks and groupings that give participants a new basis for defining who they are and what they are trying to achieve.

Whether the partnership is based on 'agency'- one organisation helping with the achievement of another's objectives- or a 'club' partnership based on conjoint goals or on 'a polity forming type' where actors build a shared agenda, there is a process of resetting of identity among participants to orient towards the new governance task ( Skelcher et al, 2005). As Newman (2001: 6) argues to understand governance requires a focus on 'the way in which social arrangements are constructed as a result of the production of meanings and the repression, subordination or coordination of alternative meanings'.

3. *A third assumption is that the goal of self-governance is more prominent than in the past; citizens expect to make more choices and more decisions and governing becomes about supporting people to govern themselves*

The governance paradigm rejects government command and control as an approach not only because it is viewed as not likely to work but also because the polity has entered a period where citizens are focused on their rights, entitlements and capacities to get things done.

Everyday makers and expert citizens occupy the governance world where citizens are taking the initiative and leading change rather than waiting for the guidance of government and their emergence is a functional response to the new conditions of governing (Bang and Sørensen,

1999). As a result, it is important to view governance as a ‘communicative relationship’. The new context of governing demands that the processes of exchange between governed and governors is open, developed and reflexive. Government is in ‘a state of constant ambiguity’ and ‘new more engaging and flexible forms of governing will have to be offered to citizens’ (Bang, 2003: 8).

The theme is developed further by a general argument about the need to think about ways of doing democracy that break from an over-reliance on the traditional instruments of representative democracy. As Sorensen and Torfing (2017:830) note that while achieving greater effectiveness has been a strong theme in governance studies ‘there has been a growing interest in how governance networks can increase democratic legitimacy in public governance by enhancing democratic participation and deliberation’. Greater participation is viewed as a key mechanism for bringing different perspectives and voices together to provide an environment where existing practices can be challenged, and alternatives can be explored.

4. *Connected to this assumption there remains a role for a central authority or government to steer governing processes which in turn may require new practices of meta-governance. This role is underwritten by the capacity of government to have the expertise and legitimacy to frame rules, establish shared understandings and support processes leading towards co-ordinated outcomes*

Within the governance literature the concept of metagovernance developed to address these issues. Some writers used the discussion of metagovernance to explore the tactics and strategies used by government and other actors (Sørensen and Torfing, 2009). The core argument is that government is acquiring new skills in order to operate within the world of network management. This argument is developed by others who seek to provide

1 practitioner-oriented advice and theory (Salamon, 2000) and focus on government learning  
 2 to operate in a different way. Governance researchers taking a more state centric approach  
 3  
 4 focus on how metagovernance can be about the state finding a way of working through  
 5 networks of governance to achieve its ends. This perspective is less concerned with how  
 6  
 7 public officials play the game of metagovernance and more focused upon their capacity to do  
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 9 so. Bell and Hindmoor (2009:190) argue that embedded states, those intertwined in complex  
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 11 governance arrangements, can metagovern effectively and ‘are not undermined by close links  
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 13 with powerful economic actors, but rely on them’. And conclude their study by commenting  
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 15 that ‘governments have *enhanced* their capacity to achieve goals by developing closer  
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 17 relationships with non-state actors’.  
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- 25 5. *A final if largely unstated assumption is that governance operates in the context of a*  
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 27 *pragmatic understanding of the nature of democracy based on the idea that*  
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 29 *democracy works through the reconciliation of diverse interests and communities*  
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 31 *driven by complex and often opaque processes of bargaining and mutual adjustment.*  
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35 Democracy is viewed through a pragmatic lens driven by values of toleration and stability  
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 37 (Canovan, 1999). The pragmatic way of looking at democracy promotes it as a form of  
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 39 governing that enables conflicts to be managed between antagonistic interests without resort  
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 41 to violent exchange. The history of democracy is the history of making institutions that  
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 43 enable that ‘binding’ to work and to be sustained through institutions such as elections,  
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 45 assemblies, lobby group organizations and access to constitutional protection of freedoms and  
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 47 rights. Governance does not reject that binding role of these mainstream institutions but  
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 49 rather argues that they need to manage their relationship in a more dynamic and interactive  
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 51 manner in order to deliver the future of pragmatic democracy. Representative institutions  
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 53 and other more established features of governing are not asked to leave the stage of politics  
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rather the idea is that they will be added to and complemented by new institutions and practices of governance in a post-liberal democracy (Sorensen and Torfing, 2005).

### **The rise of modern populism**

In the past, populism has been associated with the oppressive and intolerant political ideologies or creeds such as Nazism that were blatantly antidemocratic. But populism today finds its most common expression inside democracies and has in most cases forged a relationship with democratic institutions (Albertazzi and Mc Donnell, 2008; Chwalisz, 2015; Elchardus and Spruyk, 2016). These modern forms of populism do not propose to abolish free elections or install dictatorship: on the contrary, their demand is for a democracy that ‘delivers what the people want’. Populism finds its modern voice in challenging the practices of governing in contemporary democracies.

There is as much dispute about defining populism as there is about governance, both are contested concepts. But there is substantial support for the idea that modern populism gains its strength from its challenge to representative democracy defined by three elements of political practice: anti-elitism, anti-pluralism and direct representation (Müller, 2017; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017; Urbinati, 2014). The governance paradigm, as we have argued, also sees itself as a challenger to representative politics. The trajectory of the two challenges are very different, however, such that it will become clear that populism not only contests liberal representative democracy but also threatens the governance paradigm.

For a political practice to be labelled as populist, it can be seen as having three elements.

First, populists are critical of elites and take a stance opposed to a perceived usurping by the elite of the people’s democratic control. Hence Farage, former leader of UKIP claiming the Leave vote in the UK’s EU 2016 referendum as ‘a victory for real people’, against the elites that hold told them that they should stay in (Müller, 2017:22) Populism relies on the

1 distinction between a pure and sovereign people, on the one hand, and a corrupt and  
2 unresponsive political elite on the other, and the moral primacy of the former over the latter.  
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4 As Canovan (1999) notes populists operate with a more morally-loaded, redemptive  
5 understanding of democracy. Democracy can lead to a better world by giving the people the  
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7 power to take control of their lives: it is a politics of faith, built on the belief that the world  
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9 can be a better place if people find a strong or even charismatic leader that works for them  
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11 with passion and commitment. When the “Us” triumph over the “Them” politics finds its true  
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13 function as expressing the moral right of the people to rule.  
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20 Populism glorifies “the people” but offers a singular take on who “the people” are; as such a  
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22 second crucial feature is that it is opposed to a pluralistic understanding of society. Populists  
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24 deny diversity among citizens and rely on the myth that there is an authentic, homogeneous  
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26 “people” whose values and interests they understand. ‘Populists claim that they, and they  
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28 alone, represent the people’ argues Müller (2017:3). Those opposed to their worldview can in  
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30 this light all too easily be labelled enemies of the people. Populism’s tendency to demonize  
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32 its opponents in political debate means that many populists boast that they do not like to  
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34 listen and want instead to ‘tell it like it is’. The narratives of populism often portray  
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36 opponents as evil rather than simply people with different interests or values, often taking an  
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38 emotive tone that can undermine the role of reason, evidence, respect and rules in the  
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40 political process. So, although populism has accommodated itself to politics as practiced in  
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42 twenty-first century democracies it does so on its own terms and in way that challenges the  
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44 assumptions of the established political system and the pragmatic understanding of  
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46 democracy.  
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54 Finally, populists give a special role to the leader who can express the viewpoint of the  
55  
56 “people”. Populists have a ‘noninstitutionalized notion of the people’ (Müller, 2017:31).  
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58 The leader discerns what the people know and want and intermediary institutions such as  
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1 parliament, non-governmental organisations or the media that threaten this direct  
2 representation (Urbinati, 2014) are a focus for criticism or control. Direct communication  
3 through TV, social media is characteristic of how populist politics works. Italian Grillo's Five  
4 Star movement grew out of his blog. The President of the United States Trump uses Twitter  
5 as a key weapon and displays another feature of populism, that is a tendency to dismiss others  
6 as sources of fake news or speaking for special interests rather than the people. The populist  
7 leader claims to speak directly for and to the people.  
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Populism can take a variety of shapes. A key dimension of populism is built on the axis of  
'us' against 'them', and as such it can take a variety of diverse positions and platforms. It just  
depends how the 'us' is defined, and who exactly the 'them' is taken to be. It could be that  
the 'them' is the liberal establishment, immigrants or 'big business' or corporations. As  
Mudde (2016: 68) explains: 'Populism can be found on both the left and the right and rarely  
exists in a pure form, in the sense that most populist actors combine it with another ideology.  
This so-called host ideology, which tends to be very stable, is either left or right. Generally,  
left populists will combine populism with some interpretation of socialism, while right  
populists will combine it with some form of nationalism'. Populism as a way of doing  
politics is a potential threat to the governance paradigm in either form since in both right and  
left-wing expressions, despite major differences over ends, it is the means of governing  
celebrated by the governance paradigm that is a shared focus of attack.

### **The challenge of populism to governance**

Even the very brief depiction of populism provided above gives a number of indications that  
its proponents and supporters see the world very differently from the perspective offered by  
the governance paradigm. This section of the article returns to each of the five underlying

1 assumptions of the governance paradigm to clarify and expand on how they are threatened  
2 by the emergence of populism.  
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5 The first and most obvious challenge is that populism is not comfortable with the idea that  
6 governing is about embracing diversity and recognising the interdependence of interests who  
7 need to work with one another. Governance embraces pluralistic diversity and difference,  
8 whereas populism does not. The people are not a “hot potch” of different groups and interests  
9 but are essentially homogeneous and riven by no fundamental division; except from corrupt  
10 elites. For populism the governing challenge is defined as the people- as a group with shared  
11 ambitions and interests - versus an elite or establishment that fails to respond to popular  
12 demands or concerns. What is needed is not pandering to diverse minorities but a stronger  
13 willingness to put the interests of the “silent majority” first. One of the ways in which this  
14 focus finds concrete expression is concern about the impact of immigration and the threat of  
15 terrorism. In a now familiar narrative the needs, values and interests of natives or the host  
16 community are viewed as in danger of being undermined by the way that globalisation,  
17 migration, and free movement of labour has driven societal change. Global elites have got  
18 their mobile workforce and increased productivity and creativity; but the cost is experienced  
19 by many others in terms of loss of community, increased inequality and greater social  
20 alienation. The narrative can be challenged but it is grounded enough for populists to  
21 exploit it in diverse ways. Governance sees the interdependence of a complex pluralist  
22 world as part of a new world order. Populism has a nostalgic commitment to an older order of  
23 less diverse and more settled communities.  
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51 The essence of populism is the construction of “us” and “them” social identities which seek  
52 to deny the value and validity of a cosmopolitan and pluralistic social settings of  
53 interdependence. The definition of the divide can come in the form of a focus on rural versus  
54 urban identifies, ethnic or religious divisions, class or economic conflicts or geographical  
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1 differences. The enemy is usually drawn from those city dwellers, races, religions, or rich  
2 people who have conspired with the political elite to disadvantage ordinary folk in terms of  
3 access to power and just rewards. The governing challenge from a populist perspective is not  
4 to build on interdependence but rather about how to deny it.  
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10 The second assumption of governance- that looks to the reconstitution of actors and the  
11 building of new identities to express mutuality and solidarity- is in the light of what has been  
12 argued above also plainly an anathema to many populists who see a political world as defined  
13 by regret or nostalgia about the loss of past identities. Throughout Europe populists call for  
14 the reassertion of past identities that are regional or more local. In Hungary and Poland  
15 populist leaders talk of a return to the identities of the past: nationalistic, Christian and mono-  
16 cultural. The European Union (EU) has been targeted by many populists as an elite project  
17 and one built on creating a false shared European identity. Populists complain about the EU  
18 riding rough shod over national and regional identities, its costs, its bureaucracy and its  
19 favouring of certain interests over others. Pragmatically many populist parties have gained by  
20 winning representation at the European Parliament and then using the funds obtained through  
21 their representatives to support further expansion of their parties' activities. Populist leaders  
22 rail against the false identities created for governing convenience and want to go back to  
23 something they view as more natural or organic.  
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45 The third assumption of much of the governance literature- that governing practice  
46 needs to build around the idea that there is a large grouping of citizens committed to  
47 governing themselves- is also challenged by the rise of populism. Governance  
48 valorises citizens doing it for themselves as everyday makers, but the populist paradigm  
49 is rather about getting government to do the right thing by the people. Populists do not  
50 value activism or autonomy, as such, they rather value responsive leadership that  
51 speaks and acts for the people. The goal is what Mudde (2004:558) calls 'politicians  
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1 who *know* (rather than ‘listen to’) the people, and who make their wishes come  
2 true...What they demand is *responsive* government, i.e. a government that implements  
3 policies that are in line with their wishes. However, they want the politicians to come  
4 up with these policies without bothering them, i.e. without much participation from  
5 them’. What modern populism rests on, in all its forms, is the claim that it will make  
6 the ‘grand project’ of democracy work by creating a form of politics that is responsive  
7 to popular will.  
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Populists do want leadership but they are vociferous in their rejection of the current political establishment of contemporary democracies and are therefore critical of the fourth assumption of the governance paradigm that political leaders or governments can steer governance processes. Indeed, they can appear suspicious of most institutions that get in the way of communication between the leader and followers. How can politics be responsive- a populist might ask - when formal institutions including the European court, self-serving civil servants or informal institutions such as lobbyists, special advisors and spin doctors get in the way? More generally there is scepticism about the value of expertise from populists and their supporters. In the UK’s 2016 EU referendum Leave campaigner Michael Gove’s assertion that “people in this country have had enough of experts” was one of the striking moments of the campaign (Stephens, 2016). Echoes of anti-expertise thinking can be seen in populist mantras more generally. What do these climate change experts know that local farmers cannot know better? Why should we accept that those marine scientists know more about fishing stocks than fisherman that brave the high seas? What do economists know since they failed to predict the financial crisis of 2007/8? Formal expertise is not prized as much by populists as the expertise that is gained through craft, experience and

1 hands-on engagement. Governance steered by effective technocratic or legitimate  
 2 political leadership is a claim with oxymoron overtones for most populists.  
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 5 Finally, populism does not respect core features of politics – the search for compromise  
 6 between different interests, the need to understand another’s position and the  
 7 complexities of implementation – and as such it challenges the fifth governance  
 8 assumption identified earlier. It posits in contrast that when the people speak, the  
 9 government should act to fulfil their wishes. The problem is establishment politicians  
 10 who are viewed as out of touch and living in their “government bubble”, far from the  
 11 concerns of real people. Governance processes are complex and tedious and populists  
 12 prefer a politics of redemption. They want to be told that politics is exciting and can get  
 13 things done.  
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## 28 **A potential suspicion of governance tools**

### 29 *Problems with the use of networks*

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 34 For some advocates of governance, as noted earlier, governance has good credentials for  
 35 developing a democratic practice through creating networks of participants who interact  
 36 together – using their knowledge and insights – to develop better- informed policy outcomes.  
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 42 But others see networks as a potential source of democratic deficit (a point conceded by  
 43 many governance researchers: see Klijn and Skelcher, 2007) and in particular they note that  
 44 this deficit can become the target of anti-establishment populists (Papadopoulos, 2002).  
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 49 ‘This deficit mainly stems from four properties of network governance: the weak presence of  
 50 citizen representatives in networks; the lack of visibility and uncoupling from the democratic  
 51 circuit; the multilevel aspect; and the prevalence of ‘peer’ forms of accountability’  
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 56 (Papadopoulos, 2007: 470). Networks as a tool in this light could become a focal point for  
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1 potential suspicion from populists. Populists can exploit each of the four properties of  
2 network governance in a critical attack.  
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5 Lack of visibility provides a breeding ground for suspicion about governance arrangements.  
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8 The EU provides a constant source of criticism for populists because for many citizens its  
9 decision-making is out of view and more generally opaqueness in decision-making structures  
10 creates the sense of a submerged state that is beyond popular control (Mettler, 2011). In  
11 governance arrangements either too few are involved in decision or too many, creating the  
12 paradox of a decision where no one is in a position to take responsibility, the ‘problem of many  
13 hands’ (Bovens, 1998 ). Another area of concern is that when networks blur responsibility so  
14 that those ‘in a position to interpret and lead public debate can, often with considerable  
15 effectiveness, blame others for failures and difficulties. Blame avoidance and scapegoating  
16 are not new political phenomena but governance structures do extend the capacity for such  
17 activity’ (Stoker, 1998:22). Elected officials struggle to exercise oversight over complex  
18 network systems with the constant risk that ‘decisions will be made by actors other than those  
19 regarded as legitimate decision makers by ordinary citizens or by members of the affected  
20 communities’(Papadopoulos, 2007:475) .  
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40 Accountability within networks is driven more by peer pressures and expressed through the  
41 building of trust *within* the network rather than the *external* form of accountability favoured  
42 by populists, which is direct accountability to the people. Add to the mix the complex and  
43 multiple levels of some governance networks and it becomes increasingly clear how and why  
44 mechanisms that some governance advocates see as enhancing democracy are viewed from a  
45 populist perspective as contributing to the undermining of democracy. Networks, populists  
46 fear, are opaque, exclusionary and unaccountable.  
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1 For populists networks can also be a source of corruption. The *Five Star Movement* in Italy  
2 provides one example of a party mobilising explicitly on the issue of opposition to  
3 corruption. Transparency tends to be favoured by populists and networks, as even the  
4 advocates of network governance concede, find transparency difficult to deliver. Moreover  
5 populists can fear that the processes of networking, deal-making and compromise reveal a  
6 corruption at the heart of politics. Taggart (2016) argues that some practices of consociational  
7 democracy are particularly prone to being criticised for tying the political processes up in  
8 elite knots. For parties like the Freedom Party in Austria, it has been the collusion between  
9 the major parties and their tendencies to act together and to act in ways that have placed them  
10 at a distance from citizens that have made the established political parties such objects of  
11 scorn. The Austrian case with its consociational aspects, of course, particularly lends itself to  
12 the idea of parties divorced from their constituencies, but this critique of the corrupting nature  
13 of parties is widespread.

### 31 ***Problems with the use of markets***

32 Marketised governance in its various forms could also be a target for populists. The  
33 Greek leftist party Syriza came to power in Greece in 2015 and promised to revise the  
34 unpopular privatisation programme that involved the selling off of assets owned by the  
35 state, although it has had to concede ground on this issue under pressure from the EU.

36 In UK, the Corbyn led Labour Party has also raised concerns about the private  
37 ownership of public services; with similar concerns finding expression in Spain and  
38 Italy.

39 The grounds of concern reflect classic populist territory. First many of the asset sales  
40 appear to be to other state-owned companies-including some based in China. There is  
41 the concern that consumers pay more for privatised utilities and that the buyers “cherry  
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pick” the successful ones and leave the state to subsidize others, or rely on state-subsidy to a considerable degree. The strategy of austerity driven privatisation, it is claimed, merely allows the banks and finance companies hit by the financial crisis of 2007/8 to recoup losses at public expense through the backdoor. As the Transnational Institute (TNI) argues there is clear link between this privatisation practice and populist resurgence. It comments: ‘this powerful nexus of forces cannot hide the social costs of policies that put private profits before human needs. Along with anger at the surging inequality expressed in the rise of anti-establishment party candidates on both sides of the Atlantic, there is also growing disaffection with growing cases of privatisation that have led to declining public services and rising prices... European Commission bureaucrats would do well to learn from before ploughing ahead with the next wave of austerity-drive privatisation in its most indebted countries. Their failure to listen, will only contribute to a growing disaffection with the European Union project, from both the left and the right, that won’t be reversed until economic policies are designed for the benefit of the majority rather than a privileged minority’ (TNI, 2016)

Similar concerns can be expressed about another practice of marketised governance: outsourcing. The practice of contracting public companies to provide public service has attracted the concern of the Corbyn-led Labour Party in the UK and especially around the provision of health care through the NHS. Critically contracts allow profit taking at the expense of taxpayer and the workforce by outsourcers and has created giant conglomerates which are largely unstable bidding machines driven by the hunt for fresh contracts and acquisition, not the pursuit of efficient service delivery ( Bowman et al, 2015). Defenders of governance could point to counter-evidence of debts paid off due to privatisations, new capacity to deliver through out-sourcing or of problems solved through network collaboration and relational contracting. But such arguments

1 may not be a powerful contribution to public debate faced with a wave of populist  
2 outrage.  
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#### 4 **Concluding remarks**

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9 In the concluding discussion two issues are explored. First, we consider what the governance  
10 paradigm in its analysis of contemporary democracy missed to make it vulnerable to the  
11 populist surge and, second, we ask how it could respond?  
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#### 16 ***Governance: sowing the seeds of its own destruction?***

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21 The classic governance defensive mantra of “it is what works is that matters” can look weak  
22 when faced with an ideological attack from populists. Arguing that important incremental  
23 gains can be made through innovative governance arrangements might pale in impact when  
24 met by claims of moral failure (profits before people), corruption (dodgy deals) and injustices  
25 (only the few benefit) in the lines of attack open to populists with respect to these governance  
26 practices.  
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37 More generally, governance is vulnerable because it has been associated in many of its  
38 manifestations with a broader focus on depoliticization and a preference for technocratic  
39 decision-making (Fawcett et al, 2017). In Europe, responding to the totalitarian experiences  
40 of the interwar years, those elites rebuilding democracy wanted to divide power, develop  
41 strong legal protections and move decision-making to supranational bodies to avoid the  
42 nationalist failings of the past. To an extent the political order of which governance is part is  
43 premised on a ‘distrust of popular sovereignty’ and as such was then particularly vulnerable  
44 to a populist onslaught that claimed, however falsely, to be bring rule by the people back into  
45 focus (Müller, 2017).  
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1 The rise of populism draws its inspiration from the same social and economic changes that  
2 encouraged the development of the governance paradigm. Globalisation, the weakening of  
3 national sovereignty and the emergence of more challenging citizens led theorists to see the  
4 new practices of governance as response. Governance seemed to offer a more adaptable form  
5 of governing able to deal with a new context for governing. Yet populism reflects a very  
6 different response to the same set of forces. Its reaction is more one of ‘back to the future’ in  
7 style: let’s restore lost identities and a simplified version of democracy that delivers rule by  
8 the people. The governance paradigm and the rise of populism are responses to a degree to  
9 the same set of forces.  
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22 Governance saw a world of many divides but no big divide. Yet bifurcation of the economy  
23 may be delivering the big divide unseen by governance advocates and opening up the  
24 prospects for populism (Jennings and Stoker, 2016). Many developed economies are  
25 splitting between locations where clusters of industries are developing new products and  
26 services, drawing in large numbers of migrants from both within and beyond national  
27 boundaries and creating a tranche of high paid employment. These dynamic cosmopolitan  
28 areas are driving the future of national economic prosperity in a harsh globally competitive  
29 world. Outside of these areas there is a rather different economic and political dynamic  
30 dominated by areas that are either in a steady state or in long-term decline. The two cultures  
31 of these economies encourage their citizens to see the world in very different terms  
32 (Goodhart, 2017). One part of society is occupied by a large number of well-educated, city  
33 dwellers in creative or dynamic economics and one is occupied by less well-educated citizens  
34 outside those areas. The liberal, socially mobile and university-educated “people from  
35 anywhere” as Goodhart describes them are perhaps more inclined to support the new world  
36 of governance as a way of governing. On the other side are conservative, marginalised  
37 “people from somewhere”, who subscribe to a roots-based conception of national identity and  
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1 cherish ways of life that have been lost or are under threat. And are, perhaps, more likely to  
2 hold a populist understanding. The cosmopolitan communities might have more citizens  
3 inclined to embrace governance because of its commitment to diversity, partnership and  
4 finding the right solution fits in with the wider social and economic environment in which  
5 they operate. For people in other areas, the appeal of populism is potentially more powerful  
6 because its matches their sense that they have been left behind. Governance theorists may  
7 then be implicated in the vulnerability of the paradigm through a tendency to see the world  
8 through cosmopolitan eyes.  
9

### 20 *How can governance respond to populism?*

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22 To argue that governance needs to learn to deal with turbulent times (Ansell et al, 2017)  
23 while, arguably, laudable runs the risk of missing the thrust of the populist attack. Turbulence  
24 can be a product of the policy environment – and reflected in unexpected events or disasters  
25 or rapid changes in circumstances – but it can also be reflective of changes in political  
26 context that are considerable more difficult to respond to, especially if they go to the heart of  
27 not just the outputs of governing but its processes. Populists may object to governance’s  
28 association with a globalised world that privileges cosmopolitan communities but they also  
29 object to the way that governance does its work.  
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43 Paradigms for steer governing choices do not inherently last for ever, although institutional  
44 elements may be left behind. Corporatism and neo-corporatism – prominent in the 1970s and  
45 80s- are governing frameworks that declined because of changed economic circumstances.  
46  
47 But there is also evidence that corporatism adapted and evolved to cope with a different  
48 environment (Molina, and Rhodes, 2002). There appear to be two available strategies of  
49 adaptation for the governance paradigm. One sets it down a more technical path and another a  
50 more political path.  
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1 The technical argument suggests that governance could accommodate itself to populist  
2 politics. Let the populists run the front-stage of governing but let governance keep a grip over  
3 the back stage of implementation, and so steer policy development away from the razzmatazz  
4 of populism. Governance is well suited to the backstage practices identified by Klijn (2016),  
5 using networks between officials to develop and implement practical policies to solve societal  
6 problems. Governance may encounter difficulties in a front-stage of media focused and  
7 oriented politics -that arena loved by populists. But if it can steer away from that  
8 engagement then the standard arrangements of the government paradigm could still apply.  
9 The message is that while politicians may move on to the populist terrain officials can still  
10 use governance techniques to get things done. Governance can forgo the input side of politics  
11 and focus on doing better on the output side. Kettl (2017), suggests that governments could  
12 earn back public respect and trust by getting better at doing what he calls the retail level  
13 functions of delivering, operationally, policies that are fair and effective, connected to what  
14 people want. In a turbulent environment the argument is stick to the basics of implementation  
15 governance and do it well.

16 Yet there is no reason to assume that populists when in government will leave the backstage  
17 processes of governance alone. As noted earlier there are reasons for populists to be  
18 concerned about networks and markets as tools. Moreover, as Müller (2017: 44-49) notes  
19 when in power populists want to intervene rather than leave the delivery of government  
20 services alone. They are often keen to colonise government positions, seeing it as an  
21 opportunity to exercise more personal control over the bureaucracy. They engage in mass  
22 clientelism, offering material or symbolic benefits in return for votes (for example by offering  
23 free bus passes for the young or trade sanctions to protect core favoured industries) which  
24 means they want to direct policy for political purposes, not leave it to officials.

1 Given doubts about the potential for escape down a technical path could the governance  
2 paradigm respond more politically? . Those looking for a political response to populism  
3  
4 sometimes call for more education about citizenship and the complexity of policy choices.  
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7 But that is unlikely to make a difference. Populism does not see the need for the people to be  
8  
9 educated or learn the skills of citizenship; rather, it is assumed that the people have those  
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11 skills and the good sense to make wise decisions and that all that is required is an opportunity  
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13 for them to express their views and leaders that will act on those views (Mudde, 2004). For  
14  
15 populists, the common sense of people is what should drive politics.  
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20 A similar level of doubt could be expressed about another political response to populism: a  
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22 call for more citizen participation, more democratic innovations or even more referendums.  
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25 Given the analysis presented above such an approach would not appear appropriate as it  
26  
27 misreads the underlying drivers of populism. A laudable concern to further democratise  
28  
29 networks of governance is unlikely to convince those who sign up to the populist perspective  
30  
31 that views the problem as networks, and the other governing mechanisms of the governance  
32  
33 paradigm, that stand in the way of the direct popular will. The populist argument is for a  
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35 simple connection between people and a responsive leader, not for a push to make new  
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37 demands on citizens and added layers of complexity to decision-making.  
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46 If governance paradigm is to take on populism politically it needs to change its political  
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48 mantra from an argument that expresses the democratic value of governance as primarily  
49  
50 based on the idea that networks are a smart way of governing in a complex world. The claim  
51  
52 should not be that governance is “smart” but rather that it can avoid “stupid”. Urbinati  
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54 (2014) argues that the only plausible democratic promise is not that people can rule but that  
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56 they can eventually change things they do not like. Governance procedures then need to be  
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1 promoted as open to revision; backed by a recognition that they can develop faults- networks  
2 can become too closed and markets can become too controlled by narrow set of interests. To  
3  
4 be open to revision is a better answer to claims of dissatisfaction with political processes  
5  
6 than a dubious claim of having achieved smartness. Networks and markets as forms of  
7  
8 governing need to be defended as not as stable parts of the governing system but as  
9  
10 constantly open to revision through sunset clauses, periodic reviews and stringent  
11  
12 accountability.  
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17 Beyond this defence move it needs to be recognised that the rejection of the governance  
18  
19 paradigm by populists is partly pragmatic (it does not work for me) but also ethical and  
20  
21 moral. Governance practices lead to rule by special interest, corruption, putting profits before  
22  
23 people and so on. This moral challenge needs to be met directly in any political response.  
24  
25 Governance needs to be able to offer a moral accounting for its actions to meet the moral  
26  
27 virtue of ‘rule by the people’, embedded within populism. In addition, governance needs  
28  
29 justifying myths to support its mechanisms (Stoker, 1998). The practice of metagovernance  
30  
31 (Sorensen and Torfing, 2005) needs to be less focused on finding rules for conducting the  
32  
33 internal world of network governance and more on externally promoting the value of  
34  
35 governance arrangements to the wider public. It’s not just what works that matters it is also  
36  
37 what can be justified as good, right, fair and legitimate. Governance if it is going to survive  
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39 the populist assault needs to change its over-arching mantra “to less steering and more  
40  
41 validating”. Governance needs to reconnect with rather than cut itself off from the front-  
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43 stage of politics by encouraging political leadership that is willing and able to make the moral  
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45 case (as well as the practical case) for what is being done in terms of governing, policy and  
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47 service delivery.  
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