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When migrants become ‘the people’: unpacking homeland populism

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ABSTRACT

The emerging debate on transnational populism has thus far mainly focused on cases, which have remained relatively inconsequential due to the weak institutionalisation of the political transnationalism arena. By bringing in a better-structured arena of migrant transnationalism, this paper introduces populist political parties mobilising transnational migrants to the debate and explores the resulting phenomenon of homeland populism. The paper investigates three populist parties that operate transnationally – Ecuadorian APAIS in Spain, Turkish AKP in Germany and Estonian EKRE in Finland. The analysis demonstrates that the phenomenon of homeland populism shares several distinct features despite the ideological, geographic, cultural and migratory differences between the three cases. The cases also sport differences: while the construction of ‘the people’ depends on migratory context, the construction of ‘the antagonist’ is more related to the ideational variations of populism. The study also suggests that the key target group of homeland populism are economic migrants.

KEYWORDS

Populism; migrant transnationalism; homeland politics; external voting; electoral campaigns

Introduction

Typically, migrants are featured in populist rhetoric and populism-related literature as an object: the antagonist, the scapegoat, the external other (see, e.g. Ruzza, 2018). This paper demonstrates that occasionally, migrants also become the subject of populism: part of the transnational people-as-underdog populists claim to represent and defend against the corrupt elites and societal antagonists. With a considerable amount of voters residing abroad (Collyer, 2017) and a growing number of states enabling external voting (Collyer, 2014; Rhodes & Harutyunyan, 2010; Wellman et al., 2022), a new arena for party mobilisation abroad has emerged (Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020), that is also recognised and approached by populist parties and leaders.

In this paper, we analyse how populism transnationalises thanks to migration, and more specifically, explore the core features of the phenomenon of homeland populism:

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a subtype of transnational populism, which targets emigrants and diasporans inhabiting a transnational space to engage them in the politics of their country of origin. While there are already a couple of studies dealing with the demand for populist parties among migrant voters (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2022), this paper addresses the supply side, i.e. what kind of rhetorical inclusion strategies populist parties use to incorporate transnational migrants among ‘the people’ they claim to represent.

Although the support for populists is on average lower among external voters when compared to domestic voters, homeland populism is influential in many individual cases (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2022). Homeland populism is one of the key factors that enables, e.g. Fidesz to enjoy an absolute majority in the Hungarian parliament (Simon, 2017) and helps the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) secure their dominance in Turkey as well as abroad (Arkilic, 2021). Likewise, it has led countries such as Canada, Germany and the Netherlands to ban political campaigns of political parties of other nations on their territory (Adamson, 2019; Lafleur, 2013).

The paper aims to contribute to populism scholarship that has only recently begun to extend its grasp beyond the confines of methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). There are some accounts that aim to investigate populism across national borders. For instance, scholars have theorised the possibility and relevance of transnational populism stemming from sites for democratic engagement that transcend national politics, such as the europarties, or national parties like the 5 Star Movement of Italy attempting to export their brand (Kuyper & Moffitt, 2020; Moffitt, 2017). In addition, many authors have analysed the discursive and mobilisation strategies of transnational populist movements and parties based on the example of the europarty DieM25 (e.g. Cisař & Weisskircher, 2021; De Cleen et al., 2020; Fanoulis & Guerra, 2020; Panayotu, 2017, 2021), or the Occupy Wall Street and Indignados movements (Aslanidis, 2018). However, the structural support for political transnationalisation remains rather weak. The most frequently cited and perhaps only example of institutionalised transnational politics (Vertovec, 2009), the European parliament, functions more as a supranational body politic where the nationally elected MEPs fend for national interests and not necessarily transnational ones (Bauböck, 2000). Hence, also the transnational populism building on political transnationalisation tends to remain rather inconsequential (according to Moffitt, 2017). This led us to look at other arenas of transnationalisation, which are more effectively structured.

To move beyond the idiosyncrasies of political and migratory contexts and parties, we undertake a multiple case study approach following the diverse case design logic. We will analyse the populist constructions used in three political campaigns: the 2017 general and presidential election campaign of Ecuadorian PAIS Alliance (*Alianza Patria Altiva I Soberana*, APAIS) in Spain; the 2018 general and presidential election campaign of Turkey’s AKP in Germany, and the 2019 general election campaign of the Conservative People’s Party of Estonia (*Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond*, EKRE) in Finland. While the three cases differ notably in terms of cultural, geographic, political and migratory contexts as well as their brand of populism (left-wing, authoritarian and right-wing, respectively), all three parties are clearly populist, and also influential cases, i.e. parties that scored well with the transnational voters and are influential in homeland politics. Such a setup aims to determine both the commonalities between the highly

divergent cases, i.e. the core of homeland populism, but also outline the varieties of populism.

The following article consists of five sections. First, we will outline the paper's approach to transnationalism through migration studies and outline the concept of homeland populism. Next, the concept of populism is operationalised for the empirical analysis. After the case and method section, the findings of our empirical analysis are reported, followed by a discussion and conclusion. The analysis indicates that despite notable cultural, political and ideational differences, all three cases feature a Manichean opposition between the transnational people and their antagonists. The transnational people is constructed so as to incorporate labour emigrants, who were forced to leave their homeland due to economic reasons and/or work in the lower strata of the labour market. The differences suggest that the key discursive influence in constructing 'the people' lies with the particularities of the migration histories, while the discursive construction of the antagonist is more related to the ideational type of populism.

Migrant transnationalism and homeland politics

In this section, we define the concept of homeland populism by situating it towards preceding studies on transnational populism and migrant transnationalism as the structural settings of homeland populism.

Transnationalisation is a process of fostering networks, ideas and identities across national borders (Vertovec, 2009). However, what these national borders are is interpreted differently, also in transnational populism research. The 'transnational' in populism can be treated as a spatial scale – a situation where 'the people' the populists appeal to transcend nation-state borders. For instance, research has focused on euro-parties, which operate on a supranational level, or attempts by movements, such as the 5 Star Movement or the American alt-right movement to export their ideas abroad (see e.g. Fanoulis & Guerra, 2020; Moffitt, 2017). Yet, several studies use transnationalism as an antonym to national populism. For instance, Kuyper and Moffitt (2020) as well as De Cleen et al. (2020) see transnational populism as a vehicle for overcoming nationalism as an essentialised ideological ally of populism. While the two approaches are complementary and occasionally co-exist, it is important not to conflate them: while the latter approach is more normative and serves the purpose of scholarly criticism towards conflating nationalism and populism, the former, spatial approach to transnationalism helps us understand how different structural settings promote transnational populism.

This paper adopts the spatial approach and locates populism in the arena of transnational migration. The transnational turn in migration studies began to acknowledge that migration is seldom a finite and complete exit from the country of origin and complete assimilation to the country of residence seldom occurs. Instead, migrants inhabit transnational spaces that maintain links with both the sending and receiving countries and become arenas for both everyday engagements as well as complex identity negotiations (see e.g. Basch et al., 2005; Faist, 2000). Whereas migration is not the only way in which people establish transnational grassroots-level relationships and lifestyles (Vertovec, 2009), it is still one of the main bottom-up avenues for transnationalisation, which Guarizzo and Smith (1998) have opposed to the top-down transnationalisation spurred into

existence by transnational corporations and capital, global media organisations and supranational political institutions.

The transnationalisation of migration studies has been paralleled by an increasing interest in migrants as political actors. Being transnational citizens – having some political rights and interests both in the sending and receiving country (Bauböck, 2010) – opens a multiplicity of arenas for political participation, each with their own rules and internal political logics. Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) has distinguished between four modes of transnational political participation: (1) homeland politics, or political participation in the country of origin; (2) diaspora politics, or political participation within the ethnic community abroad, which sometimes – e.g. when emigrants or their descendants are no longer enfranchised in their country of origin – substitutes homeland politics; (3) immigrant politics, or political participation in the receiving country; and (4) translocal politics, where migrants' political participation remains focused around local politics, but crosses borders, such as in the form of hometown associations.

The concept of homeland populism draws on Østergaard-Nielsen's conceptualisation of homeland politics. It refers to populism performed in one subset of the migratory transnational space: where the people-as-underdog are constituted by emigrants or diasporans, as well as their fellow nationals who stayed behind. As such, homeland populism does not have to solely account for the domestic polity or perform well exclusively in the diaspora, but rather, navigate the complex terrain of transnational networks, experiences and interests that link the transnational voters to the homeland. Another reason why we emphasise that homeland populism is but one subset of transnational populism, is that as Østergaard-Nielsen's typology points out, even the terrain of migrant transnationalism offers multiple arenas for transnational political participation. Hence, transnational populism founded on migrant transnationalism can sport different faces. For instance, we could also hypothesise over the phenomenon of immigrant populism, where immigrant voters and their transnational networks, experiences and interests are addressed when constructing the transnational people-as-underdog in their country of residence, as did various initiatives in support of Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential campaign (Robbins, 2016).

While migrant transnationalism is by definition a feature of bottom-up transnationalisation, homeland politics (as well as homeland populism) has both top-down features (e.g. granting external voting rights) as well as bottom-up features (e.g. migrants engaging with homeland political parties). Similarly, the transnationalisation strategies of political parties can be both top-down, i.e. initiated by parties' central structures, or bottom-up, i.e. initiated from the emigrant community (Jakobson et al., 2021). Thus, we can assume that the emergence of homeland populism requires both bottom-up engagement from the transnational migratory space and top-down initiative to incorporate migrants into the 'transnational people'.

Emigrants can be an attentive audience to homeland populism (or any other kind of transnational political mobilisation), as many emigrants remain stakeholders in homeland politics because they plan to return, have personal interests (e.g. real estate and investments) back home or are involved in the welfare of their significant others (Bauböck, 2010). This has also been recognised by political parties which are taking an increasing interest in voters abroad (Burgess & Tyburski, 2020; Kernalegenn & van Haute, 2020). Research into homeland politics still indicates a notable amount of uncertainty and

contradiction. While often, diasporic voters are perceived as guarantors of *status quo*, due to their propensity to vote for the incumbent (e.g. Lugalde, 2007; Turcu & Urbatsch, 2020), many cases also suggest otherwise (e.g. Collard, 2013; Collyer, 2014). Studies into the ideological leanings of overseas voters are even scarcer. Joppke (2006) suggests that homeland politics should have more relevance for right-wing parties, as they can cash in on long-distance nationalism. However, Østergaard-Nielsen and Ciornei (2019a) show that parties campaign abroad regardless of ideology. And while on average, external voters are less likely to vote for populists when compared to domestic voters, this trend varies from country to country (Turcu & Urbatsch, 2022).

Previous studies have also emphasised the volatility of emigrant voter turnout (Burgess & Tyburski, 2020; Lafleur, 2013; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2021), the linear negative relationship between time passed since emigration and the propensity to vote in homeland elections (Finn, 2020; Guarnizo & Chaudhary, 2014), and the often prevalent disaffection of migrants with politics in general, as argued by the ‘erosionist school’ of transnational citizenship (Jakobson, 2017; Kivisto & Faist, 2009). This resonates somewhat with the demand-side studies of populism that have shown that those most likely to vote for populists are the disaffected (see e.g. Spruyt et al., 2016).

Operationalising populism

Populism is a contested concept with different authors emphasising different aspects of the phenomenon. Hence, it is important to operationalise the concept for our empirical analysis. This paper follows the ‘minimal definition’ of populism, according to which populism focuses on the moralistic Manichean opposition between the people and the elites who are estranged from the people and the popular will (De la Torre & Mazzoleni, 2019). The notion of the people in a populist idea system relies predominantly on the ‘natural borders’ distinguishing the people from others (Pelinka, 2013). The people are depicted as a homogeneous group (hence the use of the concept ‘the people’ in singular), who is, amongst themselves, notably virtuous: friendly, cooperative and trustworthy (Rooduijn, 2019, p. 368). The populist notion of the people is not synonymous, but often conflated with the nation, both in political and academic discourse (De Cleen, 2017; De Cleen et al., 2020), thus functioning as a not necessary, but sufficient category in populism studies: not all populists are nativists, but in some cases (the radical right populism), the construction of the people involves nativist elements (Mudde, 2013). The same applies to a class-based conflation (Panizza, 2005; Mudde, 2017).

We adopt the minimal definition, as it conforms with both the ideational and discursive elements of populism. The ideational approach views populism as a thin-centred ideology, i.e. an ideational system that has some distinct features, but not a full-ranging political programme, thus coupling with other political ideologies like socialism, nationalism or conservatism, producing a variety of populisms, e.g. left-wing and right-wing populism (Rooduijn, 2019), democratic and authoritarian populism (Levitsky & Loxton, 2013), inclusionary and exclusionary populism (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), among others. In this paper, we are exploring three different ideational varieties of populism: right-wing, left-wing and authoritarian.

The minimalist definition has also been used under the discursive approach to populism (see e.g. Stavrakakis, 2017), which we use to identify and deconstruct homeland

populism in textual campaign materials. The discursive approach focuses on the discursive structure of 'the people' as a signifier, and then proceeds to explore 'the modalities with which populism could be associated' (2017, p. 527). The construction of the people functions as a 'nodal point' (Stavrakakis, 2017, p. 528) through which various more peripheral ideas become articulated, whereas the anti-elitism serves as a division point of the socio-political field into *Us* versus *Them*. Due to its Manichean logic, the populist construction of the people often happens *ex negativo*, via positioning it in relation to its antagonists (Mudde, 2004). According to Laclau, such an antagonism is inherently discursive and gets articulated via chains of equivalence: lists of demands that are treated as equal despite being different (Laclau, 2005, p. 106). For instance, it is symptomatic to populism to voice very different demands in a single breath, e.g. by blaming refugees for undermining national sovereignty, racial purity, the welfare state and traditional values. Populist discourse tends to utilise various qualifiers to articulate the positionalities of the people, such as the 'people as underdog' (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017), the 'real' or the 'true people' (Wodak, 2017), or the 'ordinary people' (Taggart, 2000). Populist leaders can also perform populist leadership, articulating their position as 'the true representatives' of the people (Moffitt, 2016; Wodak, 2017).

In the context of transnational populism, the demands must focus on a transnational construction of the people-as-underdog (De Cleen, 2017; De Cleen et al., 2020; Kuypers & Moffitt, 2020; Moffitt, 2017). Some contributions (e.g. De Cleen, 2017) also add antagonising transnational elites as a characteristic of the transnational dimension of populism, while others (De Cleen et al., 2020; Moffitt, 2017) see this as a sufficient, but not necessary condition.

Case selection and method

Populism research is often criticised for relying on idiosyncratic case studies (e.g. Hawkins et al., 2017; Pelinka, 2013; Stavrakakis, 2017). That is why we have opted for a diverse case design that enables us to pursue a qualitative and exploratory inquiry, whilst simultaneously ensuring higher representability than a single case study. Diverse cases require a selection strategy of two or more units (cases) which attempt to embody a full range of categorical or continuous values of *X* or *Y* (Seawright & Gerring, 2008).

We will analyse three transnational electoral campaigns – the 2017 general and presidential election campaign of APAIS in Spain, the 2018 AKP general and presidential election campaign in Germany, and the 2019 general election campaign of EKRE in Finland. Unlike the reductionist comparative design, which attempts to isolate a limited number of similarities and/or differences (Perrin, 2015), the diverse case design attempts to account for the diversity that can occur even within similarities. This also sits well with the abductive ambitions of this paper (exploring the rhetorical constructions of homeland populism), as opposed to the analytical deductive-inductive logic of the comparative design.

The three cases were selected based on the authors' contextual expertise, but also the influential presence of three factors required for consequential homeland populism: (1) an important degree of migrant transnationalism, and (2) an indisputably populist party that is (3) electorally significant among transnational voters as well as in homeland politics. The following overview will outline these similarities along with the nuances of diversity

across the three cases, which are important when interpreting the hermeneutic content of the three campaigns and the overall findings of the study.

Firstly, Ecuador, Estonia and Turkey can be described as emigration nations, and labour migration has been one of the underlying causes for the emergence of the transnational spaces of Ecuador-Spain, Estonia-Finland and Turkey-Germany (see Table 1). Yet, the time of emigration differs. The migration of Ecuadorians to Spain mostly occurred after the economic crisis in the late 1990s, when about a million Ecuadorians migrated abroad, about half of them to Spain (Ramírez & Ramírez, 2005). The migration of Estonians to Finland sped up after the 2008 financial crisis, which the government countered with austerity measures. About half of Estonians residing abroad, live in Finland – that is about 5% of all Estonians, including those residing in Estonia. Germany, in turn, is the main emigration destination for Turkish nationals with their total population around 4 million and about 1.5 million of them eligible to vote in Turkish elections. Labour migration from Turkey to Germany was initiated by the guest-worker programmes of the 1960s and many Turkish citizens are either former guest workers or their family members (YSK, 2021). However, there is also a significant segment of Turkish citizens who emigrated to Germany as dissidents (e.g. left-wing activists, Kurdish nationalists or Gulenists), particularly after the 1980 military coup.

Secondly, the three political parties have been classified as populist by numerous preceding studies, albeit assigned under different types of populism. Whilst APAIS and Rafael

Table 1. Case characteristics.

Case (polity/party election year)	Ecuador/APAIS 2017	Turkey/AKP 2018	Estonia/EKRE, 2019
<i>Political system</i>			
Political freedom ^a	3 (partly free)	5 (not free)	1 (free)
Political regime	Electoral Democracy	Electoral Autocracy	Liberal Democracy
Political system	Presidential	Presidential	Parliamentary
Party system fragmentation ^b	3.52 (ENPP) 3.07 (ENPC)	2.97 (ENPP) 2.29 (ENPC)	5.23 (ENPP)
<i>Expatriate voting context</i>			
Expatriate voting system ^c	Voting abroad for direct representation	Voting abroad for home district	Voting abroad for home district
External voter turnout	43.3%	50.1%	7%
<i>Party specifics</i>			
Type of populism	Left-wing inclusionary	Authoritarian exclusionary	Right-wing exclusionary
Position before/ after elections	Incumbent/incumbent	Incumbent/incumbent	Challenger/incumbent
% of votes in total	48.3% (legislative) 54.2% (presidential)	42.6% (legislative) 52.6 (presidential)	17.9% (legislative)
% of external votes	43.1% (legislative) 46% (Average of first round and run-off)	56.4% (legislative) 59.4% (presidential)	43.7% ^d (legislative)
<i>Migratory context</i>			
Main migratory destination, share of registered external voters	Spain 44.5%	Germany 47.35%	Finland 51%
Dominant reason(s) for migration to destination country	Labour	Labour, family reunification and political	Labour

^aFreedom house Freedom in the World Political Rights rating category in the respective year for the respective country.

^bThe effective number of political parties (ENPP) in the respective legislative elections ($1/\sum p_i^2$). For presidential elections, we calculated the effective number of presidential candidates in the case of Ecuador in the first round (ENPC).

^cTypes according to Collyer (2014).

^dOf paper ballots cast, results of online voting are not differentiated based on location of voting.

Correa have been characterised as left-wing radical populists (Collins, 2014; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013), AKP has been tagged as an authoritarian populist party in more recent studies (Arkilic, 2021; Selçuk, 2016) and EKRE is typically described as a populist radical right party (Braghiroli & Petsinis, 2019).

Thirdly, the unifying factor across the three cases is that all three parties have captured a significant share of votes both within the country as well as abroad and subsequently, became parties in government (see Table 1): while APAIS and AKP formed majority governments, EKRE became a junior partner in a government coalition. However, their histories of electoral success are rather different (See Table 1). While APAIS has enjoyed significant electoral support abroad for a relatively long time already, the AKP has ventured abroad for diaspora support relatively recently, allowing Turkish citizens to vote abroad since 2014. EKRE founded a branch in Finland in late 2014 and is thus a newcomer in homeland politics. Furthermore, the parties were campaigning from rather different positions: while APAIS and AKP were reaching out to emigrants from an incumbent position, where diaspora politics and policy may converge (Umpierrez de Reguero et al., 2021), EKRE was running as a challenger, particularly as it is a relatively new protest party, with the 2019 election being their second general election campaign.

Finally, it is also important to emphasise that the political contexts of Ecuador, Turkey and Estonia vary remarkably. The three differ in levels of political freedoms with Estonia classified as a liberal democracy, Ecuador as an electoral democracy and Turkey as an electoral autocracy (Lührmann et al., 2018). Turkey and Ecuador are presidential systems, where the president is elected along with the parliament in direct elections. Meanwhile, Estonia is a parliamentary system. Although all countries have a multi-party system, the effective number of political parties and the electoral threshold varies. And while all three countries allowed in-person extraterritorial voting at the national representations and embassies (and in the case of Estonia, citizens both in Estonia as well as abroad could also vote online and by post), the methods for vote counting differ. Ecuador gives its citizens abroad special representation with six out of the 137 parliamentary seats elected by Ecuadorians abroad: two to represent the Ecuadorian voters in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa, two for the US and Canada, and two for Ecuadorians residing in Europe, Asia and Oceania. Turkey and Estonia have the emigrant vote added to the domestic vote – an assimilated representation. In Turkey, votes are proportionally allocated to domestic voting districts, whereas in Estonia, non-resident citizens vote for the party lists in their or their (ancestors') district of last residence within the country (those without residence history on record vote in the first electoral district). The two systems account for more than 80% of all countries that allow external voting, while the remaining 20% of states require their citizens to return to their home country to vote, and thus do not facilitate much of a turnout or transnational campaigning (Collyer, 2014; Hutcheson & Arrighi, 2015).

The following analysis is carried out based on material collected in the framework of three individual studies, including (1) party manifestos, (2) campaign materials, including political ads, speeches and addresses by or on behalf of the candidates, (3) media coverage of the campaign as well as (4) on-site fieldwork, including interviews with party officials, activists and voters, and conducting participant observation in the receiving countries. As the studies were carried out independently from one another, there are some differences in how fieldwork was conducted or in the interview guidelines used

(see Jakobson et al., 2020; Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2020; Yener-Roderburg, 2020 for further information). But as the aim of this paper is abductive and exploratory, aiming to identify the existence of homeland populist discourse rather than measure its frequency, these differences are not of critical importance (Meyer, 2001).

Instead, we focused on ensuring equal treatment of the material for each case by establishing a common data analysis framework, which stems from the discursive approach to populism. To identify transnational populism, we reanalysed the materials, recognising references made to 'the people' and analysed the transnational dimension of this antagonism. To identify the people and the antagonists, the chains of equivalence of political demands (Laclau, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2017) articulated in the material were analysed. Here, we also paid attention to the nomination and predicates employed for the transnational people, both to identify the most typical collocations used in populism discourse, but also to identify the nuances that are associated with transnationalism. In addition, we also identified other techniques of othering such as projecting the 'enemies inside and outside nation-states' and scapegoating (Wodak, 2017).

Transnational constructions of 'the people' and 'antagonist'

EKRE

The 2019 general election TV ad of EKRE created a chain of equivalence between the people-as-underdog and the antagonists by using the colloquial phrase 'getting something':

We live in a state where everyone gets something. Government politicians get instructions from Brussels. Workers get one of the lousiest salaries in Europe. Entrepreneurs get to pay Europe's highest taxes. Laborious youth get to leave Estonia en masse. Their parents get to be ill on the patients' waiting list. Gays get special rights and free access to do gay propaganda in primary schools. Muslim immigrants get a dwelling at the government's expense. Such an Estonia has been built up by the convenience politicians of our old cartel parties. (EKRE, 2019)

The people ('workers', 'entrepreneurs', 'laborious youth' who are forced to emigrate, 'their parents') is depicted in a notably passive and disempowered position, but also has a transnational dimension. Emigrants are not treated as a separate group, emigration is a more general exit strategy for the people-as-underdog, and is not just used in campaigns targeting emigrants, but also depicted in national-level party ads.

In addition to the needs of the people, the quote also articulates a clear elite-level antagonist who is blamed for the current state of affairs: the 'government politicians', 'convenience politicians' and 'old cartel parties' (as opposed to EKRE, a new party with a mission). While transnational populism is not necessarily defined via transnational antagonisms (Moffitt, 2017), the transnational aspects of the Manichean opposition are clearly manifest in this case. The national elites are depicted as inept and doing injustice to the people and are dominated by transnational elites ('Brussels'). However, also the societal antagonists ('gays', 'Muslim immigrants'), the alleged *protégés* of the corrupt elites ('get special rights', 'get a dwelling at the government's expense') are portrayed as outsiders or external enemies (the ad uses visuals of visible minorities in non-Estonian contexts) of the people-as-underdog, a typical feat of right-wing populist discourse

(Wodak, 2017; Wodak & Krzyżanowski, 2017; Pelinka, 2013). Interviews with EKRE party functionaries suggest that their potential voter base abroad might be even more susceptible to societal antagonising since their main destinations are socially more liberal and multicultural than Estonia (Jakobson et al., 2020).

In EKRE's rhetoric, also the people are clearly transnational, although not by their own choice. In one of its ads, EKRE drew parallels between labour mobility to wealthier EU member states and the deportations in 1941–1949 when the Stalinist Soviet Union exiled over 30,000 Estonians to prison camps in Siberia, by calling contemporary emigration 'economic deportation' (Uued Uudised, 2018). The narrative of migration as a forced decision against the people's will echoes also in an interview with an activist of EKRE's Finnish branch:

People go [to Finland] for different reasons. There are young people, who simply come to gain experience. But these people do not form the backbone of EKRE's Finnish branch, the backbone consists of those people, who have left, who have been chased away. [...] Actually [EKRE] is the only party that still recognises us as 'our own'. Because for the other parties, we are the unwanted bunch. [...] And the saddest part is – these people who are here, they have tremendous competence, so many highly educated people who have become deplorable in their homeland. (Interview with EKRE's Finnish branch activist, 18.03.2018)

Here, the underdog role (being 'chased away' and 'deplorable') and collectivism ('us', 'we', 'the unwanted bunch') of the emigrants are evident. They are portrayed as victims of the particularities of the Estonian-Finnish transnational space, where many work in positions below their qualification level (Anniste, 2011). However, this quote is also instructive in indicating that not all emigrants constitute 'the people', thus underlining the exclusionary characteristic of populist construction of the people.

AP AIS

Similar to EKRE, APAIS' construction of the people and the antagonist draws on the effects of an economic crisis. In 1999, private financial institutions in Ecuador closed their doors to avoid the insolvency of the banking system and an outflow of foreign currency (Umpierrez de Reguero & Dandoy, 2020). Again, 'the people' were those who had suffered due to the crisis and the agreements between the government of Jamil Mahuad and banking elites, and emigration was perceived as an escape-valve, or a sacrificial mechanism for coping with the crisis (Boccagni & Ramírez, 2013).

What is also notable in this case, is the salience of the topic of emigration and the viability of the transnational underdog construction over time. The following quote originates from a speech by Rafael Correa, president of Ecuador from 2007 to 2017, who had run on an anti-establishment platform and in the 2017 general election, was conducting an endorsement campaign for presidential nominee Lenin Moreno:

You [emigrants] never lost your dignity. Ecuadorian society lost it by allowing millions of its children to be exiled for poverty, leaving their homeland that saw them born, to seek better opportunities in distant lands, on foreign lands. It is you [emigrants] who give us back our dignity [...]. A few years after the banking crisis, bankers again broke a historical record in profits. Governments have put bankers as finance ministers and they [the bankers] have sent money out in the name of false prudence. While you [emigrants] – the money that has been earned with so much sweat and honesty, effort, and sacrifice, in Italy, in Spain, in the United States – have sent it to Ecuador. It is those migrant remittances, which

rescued us from the crisis. I have said it before, Ecuador was not saved by bankers with their arrogance. The rich did not save it with their arrogance. The poor saved it, you saved it, our emigrants saved Ecuador. Our eternal gratitude, our eternal admiration. (Correa, 31.01.2017).

Again, migration is depicted as a forced choice (being 'exiled') and the migrants ('you', Ecuador's 'children', 'the poor') are constructed as the people in the populist sense, ascribing them a moral high ground ('never lost your dignity', making 'sacrifices', 'rescuing us', 'saving Ecuador', being the object of 'admiration', 'gratitude') while being notably in opposition to the idle and self-preserving elites. Thus, emigration is perceived not as an individual escape plan, but as a collective national salvation endeavour.

The antagonists featured in the speech (and in APAIS' rhetoric more generally) were the financial elites ('bankers'), depicted as self-interested and unpatriotic ('sent money out in the name of false prudence') and the governing elites ('governments'), who – as in EKRE's rhetoric – were simply instruments in the hands of much more powerful transnational elites. However, as left-wing populists, the APAIS did not build a societal-level antagonism between its construction of 'the people' and some other groups in the transnational setting.

Another difference with EKRE's transnational populist rhetoric is the positioning of emigrants: while EKRE tended to incorporate the emigrants into the broader picture of the people, the APAIS campaign seems to address the emigrants as a separate entity. This can certainly be related to the sheer size of the auditorium, the fact that the Ecuadorian emigrant community has lived abroad for longer, but also to the particularity of the voting system, where emigrants have special representation.

However, this does not mean that the emigrant campaign is completely separate. As the following interview caption demonstrates, while migrants might have a somewhat different focus of political interest (and the still vivid memory of the financial crisis from more than two decades ago), they are relevant agents of political socialisation also back home, since emigrants as important economic contributors for their families in the country of origin may also have an authoritative say in voting decisions (Bocagnini & Ramírez, 2013):

Migrants have an affinity for a country project, not [precisely] for a political party. They talk with their relatives left behind so they can vote in line with our [emigrants'] preferences. We have lived, for example, through a large economic crisis in 1999. We, the migrants, have a major sensibility to address how significant was the dollarisation, how significant was the Feriado Bancario for the country. There is a large concern we communicate to our relatives back in Ecuador. (Interview with an Emigrant MP, 27.03.2020)

AKP

AKP's 2018 election campaign in Germany was both institutionally and discursively different from the two examples above. The ban on foreign politicians to campaign on German soil instituted after the controversial 2017 Turkish constitutional referendum did not stop AKP's activities in Germany, except for the official party elites' physical appearances throughout the electoral period in 2018. Also, while external voting was legalised only in 2012, the party had begun manufacturing both a domestic as well as

a transnational exclusionary populist approach already a decade before (Dinçşahin, 2012; Elçi, 2019).

Throughout the 2018 electoral period, most of the campaign activities (from generating personal contacts to get-out-the-vote activities) were carried out via the AKP's most influential unofficial satellite in Germany: the Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) (Yener-Roderburg, 2020). DITIB has been instrumentalised by the AKP as a foreign and diaspora policy tool, at times working for notably politicised goals, and has become the main extraterritorial campaign hub for the AKP (Carol & Hofheinz, 2022; Lafleur & Yener-Roderburg, 2022). While DITIB has had a notable unifying role for the Sunni Muslim Turkish diaspora (Öcal, 2020), it also plays a differentiating role, excluding the Kurdish ethnic group, Alevi religious community and Gulenists (Taş, 2018). The intertwining of the religious and political dimensions in the work of DITIB is well exemplified in the following interview caption:

This [mosque] is God's home in the end. But if they come to our mosques, they have to follow our rules ... Our president is Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, we would not allow anyone to say anything against him. If they come here and attempt to change our rules, it is better for them to stay away. I cannot control my community's reactions towards these people [...] These are our mosques, and we speak Turkish here, not Kurdish. This cannot be changed. (Interview with a DITIB official, Duisburg, 21.06.2018)

The quotation above articulates a chain of equivalence to define the people ('us', 'our mosques', 'our rules', 'honour our president', 'speak Turkish') as well as the antagonist, essentially the Kurdish community and their demands ('them', 'attempt to change our rules', 'saying something against our president', 'speak Kurdish'). It is also evident that the main antagonism is played out on the societal level, emphasising the ethnolinguistic, religious, and political views.

In a way, the DITIBs are an instrument for exporting the societal antagonisms in Turkey between the various ethnoreligious groups also to the diaspora. Implicitly, it also juxtaposes communities with different emigration stories: the primarily Sunni Muslim guest workers and their family members, and the Kurds and Alevis, who primarily arrived as political refugees. As such, the campaign reinforces the cleavages, which have previously been eminent on the political activists' level (Bruce, 2018).

The ban on Turkish politicians to campaign does not mean that the whole campaign is carried out by proxies, it is simply done from a distance. The following quotation is from Erdoğan's speech at the 6th General Assembly of the Union of International Democrats (UID), another format for engaging the Turkish diaspora, which took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2018. In the speech, he lays out the guiding narrative on the transnational people and the role of the Turkish emigrants abroad, including in Germany:

Europe, which was a bitter homeland yesterday, has become a new home today. Our [Turks'] ancestors, who came from Central Asia and made Anatolia their homeland a thousand years ago, could not manage to stay here [...] Today, more than 6 million of our siblings live in Europe. We have suffered great losses in the last two centuries. Despite this, even those who remained behind [in Europe] are a great treasure in their own right. We are determined to protect this treasure, a part of which is you [emigrants in Europe], like our eyes. Although some do their best to separate us, I underline that they will not succeed [...] If some European countries can behave so rudely, it is because of the disorganisation of the Turks there [...] As

European Turks, you have supported us all along. Now we need your support once again for the June 24 [2018] elections. (Erdoğan, 20.05.2018)

While the characterisation of the people takes on a clearly ethnic-nationalist or even primordial tone (Turks as a nomadic people), its focus is not so much on the societal antagonism as in the examples above, but rather a geopolitical antagonism between the people and the antagonistic foreign countries. The people addressed in this speech incorporate the Turks abroad under a common denominator with Turks at home ('we', 'a treasure, a part of which is you'), who have suffered and need protection, as well as addresses the Turks abroad separately ('siblings living in Europe', 'European Turks', who are vulnerable due to their 'disorganisation'). Their antagonists are the notoriously impersonalised foreign countries ('some' 'European countries', 'they') who are depicted as amoral ('behave rudely'). The same narrative extends through several other speeches by Erdoğan, where he lashed out at Germany's decision-makers for the campaign restrictions:

Germany! You have nothing to do with democracy at all. Your current practices are no different from Nazi practices in the past (Erdoğan, 05.03.2017).

Discussion

The similarities and differences between the cases reveal not just a more nuanced picture of homeland populism, but also allow us to make some generalisations across cases and to posit exploratory hypotheses¹ for future research. First, the target population is broadly analogous across all three cases. This suggests that *labour migrants who have emigrated to countries with higher wages and more welfare are a likely audience for homeland populism, particularly if they had to take up blue-collar employment, which placed them into lower social strata in their society of immigration*. This was explicitly evident in the construction of the people by EKRE and APAIS, but even the AKP targeted the Sunni Muslim Turks, who emigrated primarily via the guest-worker programmes or as guest-workers' family members. Labour migration to the lower strata of the receiving society fosters the type of grievances that are often associated with the causes for populist support (Art, 2011; Hawkins et al., 2017; Spruyt et al., 2016) and are probably absent in cases where people emigrate for lifestyle or career reasons in white collar employment sectors. In Zygmunt Bauman's (1998, 2016) terms, transnational populism is a phenomenon that appeals to the 'vagabonds' and 'somewheres' rather than the cosmopolitan 'tourists' and 'anywheres'. Different migration patterns can be one reason, why for instance the French National Rally (*Rassemblement National*), which has also established several branch organisations abroad (Østergaard-Nielsen & Ciornei, 2019b), has been less successful in attracting the expatriate vote, as the transnational French tend to be relatively highly educated and moving in a different social stratum (Kernalegenn & Pellen, 2020).

Second, while the populist construction of 'the people' is more likely to be dependent on the temporalities of emigration, the construction of the 'antagonism' is linked to the ideational variety of populism (see Table 2). APAIS and EKRE, whose supporters are predominantly first and 1.5-generation emigrants, utilise the story of emigration as the central narrative of their campaign even nearly 20 years later. EKRE emphasises the forced choice to emigrate not only as a post-factum story but also as a potential

Table 2. Summary of the transnational populist constructions of the three campaigns.

	AKP	APAIS	EKRE
The people	Ethnoreligious construction of Turks who have somehow ended up abroad, important influence agents for its country and people.	Ecuadorians forced to go abroad, sending remittances home.	Estonians (esp. young people) who have been or might be forced to go abroad.
The antagonist	Elite-level: governments in host societies (e.g. German political elites). Societal-level: Gulenists, Kurds and Alevis.	Elite-level: Banking elites and governing elites as their puppets.	Elite-level: cartel parties and political establishment as puppets of 'Brussels'. Societal-level: Muslim immigrants, LGBT.

Source: Authors.

(undesired) outlook for the people still in Estonia. The AKP, whose target group consists increasingly of the descendants of the former guest-workers from the 1960s and 1970s, no longer emphasises that particular reason, but rather views migration as an inherent feature of the transnational Turkish nation and talks about a more abstract 'bitter ... yesterday'.

Based on the ideational approach, we could already predict that similar to the national context, the left-wing inclusionary populist APAIS focused on the elite-vs-the-people antagonism, while the exclusionary populist AKP and EKRE also constructed different societal-level antagonisms in the transnational setting. AKP's elite-level antagonism (with decision-makers in Germany) can be explained via the ideational variety of populism and authoritarian populists' imperial ambitions (Norris & Inglehart, 2019), but also by the party's long and uninterrupted status in the incumbent position, first as a dominant and then as a hegemonic party (Arslantaş & Arslantaş, 2022).

Third, homeland populism also features transnational dynamics: *the constructions of the people and antagonism might be translated from the homeland to the diaspora as well as vice versa*. Both EKRE and the AKP 'exported' the antagonism discourses abroad. The AKP primarily utilised the DITIB as a branch of diaspora policy to sow discord amongst different ethno-religious groups, which had become a norm in Turkey but not in the diaspora. EKRE appealed to the receiving country context, expecting voters in the more multicultural and LGBT-friendly context of Finland to be anxious and more receptive to their anti-Muslim and anti-gay messages than in Estonia. Meanwhile, the case of APAIS demonstrates that the antagonisms can also be 'imported' from the diaspora to the homeland, as emigrants remember the economic crisis of 1999 more vividly and can exert influence over their dependent family members' voting decisions.

Finally, all three parties had some degree of transnationalism in their antagonism. While we agree with previous authors (e.g. De Cleen et al., 2020; Moffitt, 2017) that it is not a necessary condition for transnational populism, the findings draw attention to the interlinkages between different types of transnationalisation and the evolution of populism. *While running in the challenger position, the domestic elites are more likely to serve as a logical scapegoat for any party; but in the position of incumbency, the legitimacy of a populist idea system is more likely to depend increasingly on antagonism with transnational (governmental, financial but possibly also intellectual) elites and/or external(ised) societal antagonists*. This also suggests that *whereas political or economic transnationalisation is seldom electorally consequential on its own, it still affects other types of transnational*

spaces as well as domestic politics. Populists cannot become transnational solely due to opposing or supporting EU federalism or the activities of transnational banking elites, but they can antagonise transnational political or economic elites in transnational spaces developed by transnationalisation from below, for instance, in the form of migration.

Of course, political migrant transnationalism still relies heavily on the national political participation context via transnationalisation from above. Also, all three examples demonstrated a nested construction of transnational people, which incorporate not just migrant transnationals, but also voters who might by no standards be transnational. This points to the supplementarity of the transnationalisation processes in the field of populism studies. The same applies also to other forms of transnational populism: the inherently transnational *Indignados* movement only achieved electoral success when it transformed into a national-level political party Podemos; DieM25 can only become electorally relevant if it achieves a critical level of support in the national European Parliament elections.

Conclusion

This study aimed to demonstrate the suitability of the transnational migratory spaces as a spatial context for the emergence of transnational populism and explored the transnationalism in the discursive strategies of homeland populism. As illustrated in this article by using the cases of Estonian EKRE in Finland, Ecuadorian APAIS in Spain, and Turkish AKP in Germany, homeland populism can flourish in very different contexts: in different migratory spaces, political cultures and political systems. The transnational people down-trodden by the self-centred ruling elites were a mainstay in all three cases, regardless of whether and how long the party had been in power, the ideational variety of populism, or regime.

The study also underscores that to understand the manifestations and consequences of transnational populism, we need to delve into the logic of transnationalisation behind it. Migrant transnationalism involves the hopes and disappointments of people who are simultaneously insiders and outsiders in both the sending and the receiving polity. They become a convenient subject of populism, when their emigration story links to crises and/or particular hopes and dreams, which met the often harsh realities of life as an immigrant. They are mobilisable via homeland populism, at least as long as the transnational migratory spaces remain vibrant enough to provide emigrants with narrative links to the homeland, the populist parties are motivated to mobilise non-resident citizens (i.e. emigrants and their descendants), and sending countries provide them the legal tool for that: external voting rights, and possibly (but not necessarily), a direct representation. The study also shows that transnational mobilisation is not only characteristic to left-wing populists (like DieM25, the *Indignados* or APAIS), but is also successfully utilised by the populist radical right and even authoritarian populists, the ideational variety thus far seldom studied in a transnational setting. Populists can either utilise the tensions in the receiving society or export conflicts in homelands to the emigrant community, thus sowing discord in the transnational migrant communities, and not even transnational campaigning bans by host societies can prevent that.

While the scope of this article was conceptual, the nature of homeland populist discourse also suggests several hypotheses about the predicting factors for the success of

homeland populism. Our study demonstrated the salience of crisis-induced and (blue-collar) labour migration in homeland populist discourse. Whether the type of migration is a predicting factor of homeland populist success, can be tested in larger-N studies involving socioeconomic data about migration flows in different migratory spaces. Also, the effects of homeland populism – including the export of domestic antagonisms into the transnational space – can be documented via studying the adoption of the populist tropes among emigrant communities. And finally, the discursive logics of homeland populism could be further explored by involving more migratory spaces of different levels of maturity and/or analysing other parties with divergent ideational types of populism.

Finally, we also encourage further studies into both the discursive as well as structural aspects of various domains of transnationalisation. The relevance of populism could also be explored in other varieties of transnational migrant politics, for instance, in what Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) calls ‘immigrant politics’. However, a more systematic assessment of the transnationalisation of populism could also be undertaken regarding the structural contexts of political, economic, as well as media transnationalism.

Note

1. To make the hypotheses clear while not disrupting the narrative of the discussion, we mark them in *italic*.

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