Images of populism and producerism: Political cartoons from Serbia's “anti-bureaucratic revolution”

Abstract

This article contributes to debates about the break-up of Yugoslavia by focusing on Serbia's “anti-bureaucratic revolution”, a large protest wave that occurred in 1988. Unlike most discussions which focus on elite involvement, this article emphasizes the wider cultural resonance of anti-bureaucratic populism. More generally, this article shows that populism can be strengthened if it is coupled with producerism, i.e. a discourse that divides society into productive and parasitic groups. Around 800 political cartoons from three Serbian newspapers are analysed. The common theme that emerges is the opposition of the blue collar worker to the parasitic political functionary.

Introduction

This article has two goals, one specific and one general. The first goal is to contribute to the study of the former Yugoslavia and the factors that lead the country toward its violent dissolution in the 1990s (for reviews see Ramet 2004; 2005; Dragović-Soso 2008; Jović 2009). One of the main links in the chain of events that eventually culminated in the bloody break-up of the federal state was the so-called “anti-bureaucratic revolution”, a large protest wave that occurred primarily in Serbia in the summer and fall of 1988. Thousands of people went to the streets to protest corrupt and distant “bureaucrats”, i.e. officials distant from the daily struggles of ordinary citizens, as well as to express their support for the Serbian party headed by Slobodan Milošević. In addition, these protesters often raised the touchy issue of Serb-Albanian relations in Kosovo and therefore strengthened the centrifugal tendencies already present in multi-ethnic Yugoslavia.

Although progress has been made with regard to our understanding of the anti-bureaucratic revolution (Vladisavljević 2008; Lowinger 2009; Lekić et al. 2009; Musić 2016), most contributions emphasize the role of elites in general and the role of Slobodan Milošević in particular. Protests are seen as manipulated, organized and stage-managed by Milošević (Bennet 1995, p. 98; Little and Silber 1995, p. 58; Pavlowitch 2002, p. 194; Gagnon 2004, p. 67; Ramet 2005, p. 56; Glaurdić 2011, p. 29; Jović 2014). Such an interpretation makes sense, especially given Milošević's well-known lust for power. This article
does not aim to downplay this segment or to deny the role of elites. Yet, such a single-minded focus on elites neglects the wider cultural resonance of “anti-bureaucratic” rhetoric. This article asks: What was it in the mainstream of Serbia's public sphere that made this rhetoric so effective?

The second goal is more general and concerns the study of populism. The problem of populism has witnessed something of a resurgence both in academic and non-academic debates. Contemporary politics abounds with populism. A number of recent political leaders and political movements have been called populist. From Syriza to Podemos, Viktor Orbán to Recep Erdoğan, Jeremy Corbyn to the UK Independence Party, populism appears to be on the rise across Europe. Academic debates have turned to the problem too, with some widely-read authors arguing that the concept should should be cleansed of its bad reputation and pejorative connotations (Laclau 2005).

How should we understand populism? As a concept, it is notorious for its vagueness. Scholars routinely bemoan the lack of an agreed upon definition (Taggart 2000, pp. 1-5; Canovan 2005, p. 10; Laclau 2005, p. 3; Panizza 2005, p. 1). Even so, most studies of populism suggest that a key component of populism is the division of society into two opposed groups, “the people” and the elite (Worsley 1969, p. 244; Canovan 1999, p. 4; Meny and Surel 2002, p. 12; Laclau 2005, ch. 4; Mudde 2007, p. 23; Hawkins 2009, p. 1042; Moffitt and Tormey 2014, p. 387). “The people” are celebrated and the elite reviled. In addition, it should be noted that populism is always present to a degree, since most politicians and parties use populist discourse some of the time. Therefore, all politics contains a populist streak (Meny and Surel 2002, pp. 11-15; Arditi 2004, p. 140-143; Panizza 2005, p. 28; Laclau 2005, p. 47).

Of course, populism can be defined in many ways. Older modernization and dependency approaches saw populism as linked to a set of economic policies (such as import substitution industrialization), while some more recent contributions see it through the prism of political strategy and political organization (Weyland 2001; Roberts 2006; Jansen 2011). It is likely that the debate on definitional issues has not ended. Yet, the juxtaposition of the evil elite and the noble people provides a good starting point. This should make it possible to study not only what populism is, but also how it comes about. This article aims to show that populism can become especially potent if it is combined with producerism.
What is producerism? It can be defined as a discourse that divides society into productive and parasitic groups. Only the former are active and contributing members of society. Producerist discourse has been documented in most depth by the literature on nineteenth century US history, especially the ideologies of organized labour and small-scale farmers relative to the business and political elites of New York and Washington (Hattam 1993; Kazin 1995; Huston 1998; Currarino 2011). Workers and farmers fall into the producer camp; politicians, rail-road tycoons and bankers into the parasitic camp. Producerism continues to live on and has continued to influence American politics to this day (Peck 2014). Yet, this emphasis on producerism has rarely been investigated in other instances of populism.

The presence of producerism is not exclusive to the US case. Indeed, it is very common in most settings shaped by modernization and industrialization. In particular, it is relevant to the world-view of the male blue collar worker. In particular, producerism makes it possible for workers to view their contributions with a sense of dignity. An emphasis on hard-work and industriousness in an industrial context leads naturally to a certain emphasis on the masculinity of work, making producerism a rather patriarchal ideology (Lamont 2000: 26). In the communist and post-communist setting, the patriarchal attitudes of pre-modern society dovetailed with the producerist streak of socialist modernization. Communist regimes idealized the male blue collar worker, with special status reserved for those groups of workers that symbolized the modernization effort. For example, in the Soviet Union, miners thought that their economic contributions entitled them to specific status as well as to the right to control the output they produced (Crowley 1997: 189). In the post-communist setting, producerism continues to survive and continues to be associated with maleness (Ost 2009: 13).

It is the link between populism and producerism that is the main topic of this article. The data-set used in this article consists of around 800 political cartoons drawn from three different Serbian newspapers. Cartoons are a source that is particularly apt for the study of populism. They are designed to target the broadest segments of society and can therefore bring out the populist repertoire of a given time and place. Three newspapers are used in order cover the range of options present in the Serbian public sphere: from Politika which became an enthusiastic supporter of protests, to the more liberal Borba, which tried to remain cautious with regard to the protests and, finally, the middle of the road Večernje novosti, which tried to address the average Serbian reader without explicitly taking a position. The main theme that emerges in Serbia in 1988 is the opposition between the blue collar worker and the political bureaucrat or functionary. In addition, the functionary is
frequently presented as sitting in an arm-chair, which becomes a symbol of the bureaucrat's parasitic nature. He is an “arm-chair politician” (foteljaš). In other words, populism in the Serbian case is driven by producerism, a popular theory of productive and unproductive work. Though there are some interesting differences across newspapers, the theme of the lazy functionary is present in all.

**Populism and producerism in Serbia**

The literature on the break-up of the former Yugoslavia has been predominantly focused on elites and much less on bottom-up or wider cultural factors. In part, this is an understandable reaction to the so-called “ancient hatreds” thesis. In his book *Balkan Ghosts*, Kaplan (1994) painted a very stark picture of deep-seated animosities between the various ethnic groups in the Balkans. According to Kaplan, people in Yugoslavia were “unusually wild and predisposed to violence” (Ramet 2005, p. 3). The book was read by Bill Clinton, John Major and David Owen, all important political figures in the international peace efforts. Most scholars reacted to the ancient hatreds thesis by emphasizing elite strategies instead, particularly the political use of nationalist grievances. Of course, Milošević stands out as one of the main protagonists in this story. The focus on Milošević has been further accentuated by the many biographies of him (Đukić 1992; Doder and Branson 1999; Cohen 2001; Sell 2002; LeBor 2004), as well as by several memoirs of high-ranking political opponents (Tomac 1993; Owen 1995; Stambolić 1995; Dizdarević 1999) which also highlight Milošević's role.

Even episodes of popular mobilization, such as Serbia's anti-bureaucratic revolution, are dismissed as top-down or orchestrated by elites in general and Milošević in particular (see the review in Vladisavljević 2008, pp. 2-4). A focus on Milošević is understandable given his political responsibility for the tragic outcomes of the 1990s. The analytical problem, however, is that a focus on political responsibility deflects attention from the wider cultural factors that set the stage for the anti-bureaucratic revolution. This article is interested in the cultural discourses that were present in the Serbian public sphere just as the protests were gathering momentum. What emerges is a strong and wide-spread populist discourse which could be used by Milošević and others once they decided to throw their weight behind the protests. Populism was aided by a long-standing producerist attitude derived from the regime's Marxist roots: society was seen as divided into producers and parasites. The former can primarily be located amongst blue collar workers, the latter among political functionaries or
The presence of populism in the Serbian case has been noticed by both domestic and foreign observers (Popov 1993; Mimica and Vučetić 2008; Bowman 2005; Laclau 2005, pp. 197-198). Even so, most scholarship tends to focus on the ethnic hostilities of the 1990s leaving unexplored the earlier period of the late 1980s. Yet, in many ways, Serbia's populism of the 1980s presents a case that would tick almost all of the boxes of even the most expansive definitions of populism: a discourse which confronts “the people” and the elite, a celebration of “the people”, popular mobilization via loose organizational forms, disrespect for institutional and legal procedures, the presence of a charismatic leader, a setting characterized by incomplete modernization, and peripheral or semi-peripheral status in the world economy.

Such “laundry lists” were typical of earlier conceptualizations of populism (e.g. Ionescu and Gellner 1969). Since then, most of these elements have been assessed as relatively common but ultimately unnecessary for populism. A useful way to define populism is to focus on the central element of populist discourse: the juxtaposition of the elite and the people. Populism can thus come to be regarded as a permanent fellow traveller of democracy, a shadow that will continue to follow it as long as it fails to deliver on its promises (Canovan 1999, p. 16; Arditi 2004, p. 141; Panizza 2005). Populism should not be seen as something that can be outgrown: it is present in latent form in all societies that rest on some notion of popular sovereignty.

While notions of popular sovereignty are ubiquitous, such that all regimes say they are based on the “will of the people”, it is harder to say why exactly “the people” should be celebrated. Why are the people worthy of the praise that populists lavish on them? After all, a plausible case can be made for the rule of the enlightened few over the people, as anti-democrats since Plato have repeatedly pointed out (Canovan 2005, p. 8). This article suggests that the answer lies, at least in part, with producerism: the people are good because they are productive. The emergence of populism is aided when notions of who the productive classes are become widespread. These notions of who the producers are need not correspond perfectly to the actual structure of the economy. The contributions of some may be overblown, those of others slighted. But the reason that the people on the whole can emerge as good is that they are seen as productive. The elite, in contrast, is painted as parasitic.
The idea that some work is productive and some unproductive has deep roots in Western culture. With the rise of capitalism, the issue became particularly salient. Liberal authors such as John Locke, Adam Smith and David Ricardo all tried to find some way to distinguish productive work from unproductive and make a case for labour as the main source of wealth. These concerns culminated in the labour theory of value which in turn found a particularly important place in Marxism (for several key contributions see Dobb 1973; Meek 1976; Roemer 1982; Hayashi 2005). For communist regimes, it was the labour theory of value, along with related ideas such as the base and superstructure model, that legitimated the dictatorship of the proletariat through the Leninist vanguard party. Blue collar workers had a special place in such ideological projects, as the group most closely connected to the creation of wealth in an industrial setting. And indeed, empirical analysis of worker ideologies in communist and post-communist settings has often highlighted the existence of producerism (Crowley 1997; Ost 2009).

Producerism should not be seen as something that has lost relevance with the demise of state socialism, or with the advent of post-industrial society. The tendency to see society as divided into productive and unproductive groups has persisted in the current neoliberal and post-industrial era. In the current constellation, the cards have been shuffled since the productive groups are no longer workers but entrepreneurs and small business owners, the “job creators” who do not live off “government handouts”, who bear the brunt of economic uncertainty, and know what it is like to “meet a payroll” (e.g. Peck 2014). In other words, producerism continues to be a key characteristic of contemporary societies and can therefore continue to provide fuel for various new versions of populism.

In socialist Yugoslavia, producerist attitudes were re-enforced by Tito's break with Stalin, after which the country attempted to formulate its own form of socialism. This lead to the idea of workers' self-management, an alternative to Western capitalism as well as Soviet etatism, both of which became anathema (Jović 2004). The critique of Soviet etatism was important since it lead to frequent attacks on the “bureaucracy.” Bureaucratization meant the usurpation of worker initiative by officials, managers and administrative staff. The divide between the active people and the parasitic bureaucracy was something that always remained latent, though the regime's authoritarian and one-party character circumscribed anything too adventurous. However, anti-bureaucratic language was used by all politicians, including Tito (see Pavlović and Stojanović 1984, p. 66). Of course, this was not too different from other socialist countries, especially where socialism was
legitimated by a domestic revolution. For example, Gorbachev in the Soviet Union and Deng in China also attacked “the bureaucracy” (Beissinger 2002, p. 60; Coase and Wang 2012, p. 115).

By the late 1980s, circumstances were right for a transition from mere rhetoric to actual mobilization in the streets. The mix included both bottom-up and top-down factors. On the one hand, protests of various groups, from industrial workers to Kosovo Serbs, were gathering momentum. On the other hand, a part of the communist elite, most notably the Serbian party led by Slobodan Milošević, chose to use the protests in their conflict with other segments of the fragmented Yugoslav state and party apparatus. In the summer and fall of 1988, large scale mobilization took place. As has since became customary to say, “the people happened” (Lekić et al. 2009).

Data

This article relies on political cartoons as a source of data. This empirical source is not used often, especially compared to conventional textual sources. Even so, there is a number of contributions that have used cartoons as data (Emmison and McHoul 1987; Morris 1992; 1993; Gamson and Stuart 1992; Greenberg 2002; Conners 2005; Olesen 2007; Morrison and Isaac 2012). Though the exact impact of cartoons is hard to measure, the recent Muhammad cartoon controversy in Denmark has shown that cartoons can be a source of great contention and conflict (Müller and Özcan 2007; Olesen 2007). The heyday of cartoons has probably passed (Lamb 2004), even though they remain highly read (Caswell 1994; Abel and Filak 2005, p. 161).

Cartoons are more immediate than conventional texts. They can help readers quickly interpret and organize events and processes from their social and political environment. Since they present crystallizations of political and social problems, they can offer small narratives regarding social issues (Greenberg 2002). Furthermore, cartoons cater to all segments of the population and do not have high pre-requisites in terms of education and specialized knowledge (Giglio 2002, p. 910). Therefore, cartoons have an effect of levelling access to political debate. In that respect, they are a particularly apt source of data when it comes to the problem of populism, whose goal is to engage the broadest segments of the population.
Cartoons are also an apt source of data for the study of populism since they are a medium that relies heavily on the personalization of social issues and social conflict. For example, instead of speaking abstractly about capital, cartoonists working for the Wobblies in early twentieth century America depicted capitalism personified in the overweight and overdressed capitalist (Morrison and Isaac 2012, p. 65). This makes it possible for cartoons to better capture binary oppositions, such as good and evil, and provide a cognitive and moral guide for everyday life (Greenberg 2002, p. 186; Morrison and Isaac 2012, p. 65). Cartoons are particularly good at allocating blame and responsibility (Greenberg 2000), which makes them a source capable of capturing populist rhetoric and imagery. They can quickly tell us who, if anybody, can be blamed for a society's troubles. They are a good window into a country's populist repertoire, whatever its particular content and relative strength may be.

This article focuses on three Serbian newspapers during a six month period in 1988. The newspapers are Politika, Borba and Večernje novosti. Politika was the central newspaper in Serbia, traditionally well-regarded and trusted, but also linked to political authorities. By 1988, the newspaper became an ally of Milošević and encouraged mobilization (Nenadović 1996; Marović 2002; Mimica and Vučetić 2008). Borba was a paper for the urban cosmopolitan elite. It was a federal newspaper with slightly different editions for each republic and province. It had much smaller circulation figures than either Politika and Večernje novosti (Ramet 1992, pp. 438-441). Borba was much less enthusiastic about the protests sweeping over Serbia. Večernje novosti was a middle of the road newspaper that had no definite editorial agenda. It regularly featured more entertainment and photography in order to appeal to a wider audience. While Politika was published by Serbian authorities, both Borba and Večernje novosti were published by the same federal publishing institution. This meant that Milošević and his circle could not influence it in the same way they could influence Politika.

The time period covered in this study is from the beginning of June 1988 to the end of November 1988. This is arguably the most dynamic period of the anti-bureaucratic revolution, though some important protests took place both before and after (for more see Vladisavljević 2008; Lekić, Pavić, and Lekić 2009). There were relatively few protests in June and July of 1988. The explosion of protest happened in September and October. In early September, Milošević publicly decided to support the protests at a session of the Serbian party. This marked a watershed moment in the protest wave (Vladisavljević 2008, p. 150; Jović 2009, p. 310). October witnessed the so-called “Yoghurt revolution”, the large protests which brought
down the political elite in Vojvodina. In November, a short counter-mobilization of Albanians in Kosovo took place. Following this escalation of conflict, the regime banned all public gatherings in Kosovo, effectively ending the protest wave. By this time, Milošević’s persona had reached levels of popularity unseen since Tito. Of course, this holds predominantly for Serbia, since other republics observed the events in Serbia with growing concern.

All three newspapers – Politika, Borba and Večernje novosti – regularly printed political cartoons which commented on the political situation. From June 1st to November 31st of 1988, the three newspapers printed a combined 844 political cartoons: 147 in Politika, 546 in Borba and 151 in Večernje novosti. This excludes cartoons for children, either Serbian or foreign (for example Disney). This also excludes foreign political cartoons (re-printed from foreign newspapers). The number of cartoon artists varied from 19 in Politika, 63 in Borba and 8 in Večernje novosti.

Following previous research (Ball & Smith 1992; Greenberg 2002; Morrison & Isaac 2012) each cartoon was coded inductively. Objects that physically appeared in the drawing were noted. Instead of trying to code more complex and ambiguous themes, the coding concentrated on cataloguing the elements present in each cartoon. This procedure is apt when it comes to the organization of a large number of cartoons quantitatively. Qualitative insights can be provided when bringing up examples of particular cartoons. In total, there were 469 different themes which were coded in the process. All of the coding was conducted by the author. Inter-coder reliability was assessed and produced agreement scores of about 92 percent.

An example can be given to show how the coding was done. Figure 1 (Večernje novosti, 17 November 1988, p. 2) is a rather typical cartoon featuring a functionary or political bureaucrat. Coding proceeded by noting all the elements physically visible in the picture: functionary, arm-chair, ear plugs, desk, carpet and door. The goal of the coding was to be as mechanical as possible. In this cartoon, the political functionary is shown as wearing ear plugs. He has pushed the desk against the door in order to prevent anyone from entering. His goal, apparently, is to sleep undisturbed in his arm-chair. This showcases one of the main arguments of this paper: the political functionary in an arm-chair is painted as unproductive and
parasitic, a stylization which made it possible for populism to emerge. But the coding itself consisted of listing visible objects.

**Analysis (I): General patterns**

Table 1 presents a list of the most common themes that appear across all three newspapers. Overall, the most common theme is the functionary. He is drawn as a generic character, not as any specific Yugoslav politician. Such a practice was still rare and only on several occasions did cartoons feature a recognizable politician. Ridiculing a powerful politician or institution was still taboo. Milošević, for example, appears only once. The second and third most common themes are the worker and the ordinary man. Table 2 presents the most frequent themes for cartoons that feature the theme of the political functionary. As can be seen, the functionary appears most often alongside workers. The second most common theme is the arm-chair. Table 3 presents the most frequent themes that appear together with the worker theme. As expected, the worker theme most commonly combines with the functionary theme. The patterns are very similar when various periods of the protest wave are examined.

[Tables 1, 2 and 3 about here.]

Figure 2 presents a network representation of co-occurrence for all three newspapers. The size of each node is proportional to the overall frequency of that theme, while the width of the ties between nodes is proportional to the number of times two themes appear together. As can be seen, the theme of the functionary is most common and appears most commonly with the theme of the worker and the theme of the arm-chair. The co-occurrence network looks very similar when drawn for specific newspapers. Once again, there is very little difference when a comparison is made for different periods of the protest wave.

[Figure 2 about here.]

A pair of examples can help flesh out the populist juxtaposition of worker and functionary. Figure 3 (*Borba*, 1 June 1988, p. 12) shows a political functionary and a blue collar worker. The worker is recognizable given his cap and chequered shirt.
The functionary says to the worker: “It is time we achieve some progress!” However, it is the worker who has to push the functionary in his armchair. In other words: politicians talk about moving forward, but it is ordinary workers who have to do all the work. Figure 4 (Borba, 17 October 1988, p. 11) is similar. It features an ordinary worker and a political functionary. The worker is dressed in overalls, a cap and is carrying a wrench. The functionary is sitting in an arm-chair, once again dressed in a suit. The worker asks: “What if I resigned?” The question implies that while the functionary can step down and give up his responsibilities, the worker cannot. His work is indispensable. The functionary, on the other hand, is replaceable.

[Figure 3 and 4 about here.]

As the analysis so far showed, the functionary frequently appeared together with the arm-chair, which signals the functionary's parasitic character. On the other hand, no theme stands out for the worker. There is no single theme which systematically appears with the worker and signals his productive character. For example, in Figure 4 he is carrying a wrench. The theme of the wrench appears only twice. The hammer, a similar theme, also appears only twice. It may well be that the worker's status as producer was so self-evident that it did not require elaboration. The examples shown here point to that conclusion, but the fact still remains that no theme was common enough to leave behind statistical patterns.

Did any other representations of “the people” exist, along side the blue collar worker? As Table 1 and Figure 2 suggest, two additional possibilities are the “ordinary man” theme and the “crowd at a protest” theme. Figure 5 (Politika, 5 August 1988, p. 1) provides an example of the ordinary man theme. It shows a man drowning. Next to him, two men are talking and one of them says: “Call an ambulance! A man has fallen into the minus!” By this, he means that the man is falling into debt. Falling into “the minus” is the Yugoslav equivalent of being “in the red.” The man who is drowning is not a political functionary nor is he recognizable as a blue collar worker. Therefore, it would be best to call him an ordinary man. This cartoon is not explicitly political: it does not criticize bureaucrats or engage the political elite directly. Of course, it references the economic crisis so it is political in a less direct way. The relevant thing to note here is that there is very little populism or producerism. Therefore, Figure 5 is a good example of the less politicized theme of the ordinary man.

[Figure 5 about here.]
What about the “crowd at a protest” theme? As can be seen in Table 1, this theme was particularly common in *Politika*. Figure 6 (*Politika*, 12 September 1988, p. 10) provides an example of the crowd theme. In the cartoon, a group of people at a protest is pushing a ball of yarn. The image is interesting for the way it flatters “the people”: they are pictured as determined to see things through to the end, at which, presumably, important truths about Yugoslav politics will be revealed. This is in tune with *Politika*’s mission of encouraging popular mobilization. Figure 7 (*Politika*, 23 September 1988, p. 16) shows that the theme of the crowd could also be combined with the functionary theme. In this cartoon, the functionary is drawn with black sleeve protectors, worn by clerks to protect them from ink stains. This serves to highlight the fact that the bureaucrat has an office job. His calm rest in the arm-chair is upset by the crowd which emerges from the cuckoo clock. The message again revolves around the power of “the people” to upset the *status quo*.

In other words, the theme of the crowd represents a new way of imagining “the people”, one that co-existed with the more conventional (and more conventionally Marxist) blue collar worker as the main representative of “the people.” The crowd theme was particularly common in *Politika*, and took off in the second half of the protest wave. For the first three months of the protest wave, only 2 out 45 of the cartoons published in *Politika* featured the crowd theme. In the second half of the period, 31 out of 102 cartoons featured the crowd theme. No such shift occurred in *Borba* or *Večernje novosti*. This indicates that *Politika* began to support the protests in ways that others did not.

The analysis can be extended into statistical testing. Table 4 presents the results of four logistic regression models. These models include the most common themes as predictors and several control variables as well. The goal of the models is to investigate which themes tend to combine. The dependent variable in Model 1 is the presence of the functionary theme. The dependent variable in Model 2 is the presence of the worker theme. As can be seen, the variable which tracks the worker theme is positive and statistically significant in Model 1, and the variable which tracks the functionary theme is positive and statistically significant in Model 2. The odds ratios are moderately high: a cartoon was 1.96 times more likely to feature a functionary if it also featured a worker, and 1.94 times more likely to feature a worker if it also featured a functionary. This
confirms the descriptive results presented in earlier tables.

[Table 4 about here.]

Next, Model 1 in Table 4 shows that the coefficient for the variable which tracks the presence of the arm-chair theme is a positive and statistically significant predictor of the likelihood that a cartoon will feature the functionary theme. The odds ratio is very high at 6.1, which suggests that a cartoon was about 6 times more likely to feature the theme of the functionary if it also featured the theme of the arm-chair. The network graph presented in Figure 2 similarly showed the importance of the link between the functionary theme and the arm-chair theme. The cartoons presented so far suggest the same.

Model 3 in Table 4 investigates if another figure, the “ordinary man”, functioned as part of the populist and producerist discourse. As can be seen, this theme does not appear often together with the functionary theme. In fact, the coefficient for the variable which tracks the presence of the functionary theme is negative and statistically significant in Model 3. In other words, the ordinary man theme is a theme that was more frequent in less political cartoons. Model 4 in Table 4 investigates the theme of the crowd at a protest. As can be seen, this theme was more likely to appear in Politika: the coefficient is statistically significant and positive, while the odds ratio is high at almost 4. However, the theme did not seem to pair frequently with the functionary theme. Figure 7 showed that this was possible, but it was nevertheless not common enough to create a positive and statistically significant relationship. In this respect, it can be argued that the theme of the crowd did not have the same hold over the Serbian public as did the blue collar worker, the more traditional representation of “the people.”

It should be mentioned that all models in Table 4 include several control variables. These include a day counter to control for the progress of time and a count of the total number of themes in a cartoon. In addition, a control variable was constructed for cartoons with text and without (cartoons with text tend to be more straightforward in their message). This section concentrated on the main patterns for all newspapers. The next section looks more closely at differences across newspapers.
Analysis (II): Differences across newspapers

The analysis so far focused on general patterns. This section looks more closely at differences between newspapers. First, as can be seen in Table 1, although all three newspapers are similar in the rankings of the most common themes, the share of specific themes nevertheless varies across newspapers. The functionary theme is the most common in all three newspapers, but it appears in 44.4 percent of cartoons in Večernje novosti and a smaller 29.7 percent of cartoons in Borba. Some other differences stand out even more. For example, the worker theme is the second most common theme in Borba and Večernje novosti, at 21.1 and 25.8 percent respectively. However, it is ranked much lower in Politika, sixth overall, appearing in 13.6 percent of its cartoons. This suggests that Politika showed less interest in the more traditional socialist trope of the blue-collar worker.

As was already mentioned, perhaps the main difference between the three newspapers was the more common use of the crowd theme in Politika. As can be seen in Table 1, the second most common theme in Politika is the crowd at a protest, a theme that appeared in 22.4 percent of its cartoons. On the other hand, the crowd theme appeared in only 6.6 percent of Borba's cartoons and 11.3 percent of Večernje novosti's cartoons. Thus, it is possible to say that the three newspapers were politicized in somewhat different ways. Borba and Večernje novosti continued to operate with the more traditional socialist language, while Politika stepped into the brave new world of active populist encouragement.

Next, Tables 2 and 3 reveal some interesting differences regarding co-occurrence of themes. When it comes to cartoons that featured the functionary theme, the most common co-occurrence in Borba and Večernje novosti is the worker theme, 45.7 and 29.9 percent, respectively. But for Politika, cartoons which featured the functionary theme featured the worker theme less often, only 17.3 percent of the time. For Politika, the highest ranking theme for cartoons that featured functionaries is the arm-chair theme (42.3 percent). As can be seen in Table 2, the percentage for the presence of the arm-chair theme is lower for Borba and Večernje novosti (17.3 and 17.9 percent). In other words, out of the three newspapers, Politika paired the functionary theme less often with the worker than other newspapers, and more often with the arm-chair theme than other newspapers. In that sense, the producerist view according to which functionaries are lazily sitting in their arm-chairs is most common in Politika, though it is present in all newspapers.
Another way to investigate these issues is to construct mosaic plots for the relationships of interest. Figures 8, 9 and 10 provide a visual way of assessing the relationship between the functionary theme on the one hand and the worker, arm-chair and crowd themes on the other. Each mosaic plot produces tiles whose size reflects the frequency of a particular combination. It also contains information on the statistical likelihood of a given combination. In Figure 7, each newspaper has its own block of four tiles with Borba on the top and Večernje novosti (VN) on the bottom. The vertical divide tracks the presence or absence of the functionary theme while the horizontal divide does so for the worker theme. The colour of each tile provides information regarding statistical significance: how likely a given combination is given the null hypothesis of independence. Tiles that are deep blue correspond to cells where the combination is of much greater frequency than would be expected if the two variables were independent. Tiles shaded deep red correspond to combinations that are rare under the hypothesis of independence. Simply put, deep blue indicates a positive connection, deep red indicates a negative connection while white indicates the lack of a connection. The Pearson residuals which provide numeric values for this assessment are equal to the sum of squared residuals in a bi-variate test.

As can be seen in Figure 8, the relationship between the functionary and the worker theme is strongest in the case of Borba. The relationship is weaker for the other two newspapers. In other words, the traditional socialist juxtaposition of worker versus bureaucrat is strongest in Borba, a newspaper that was most wary of the protests engulfing Serbia. It tried to buck the trend by sticking to conventional socialist imagery, which was itself latently populist.

Figure 9 shows another relationship, that between the functionary theme and the arm-chair theme. This was the main producerist element uncovered in the previous section. As can be seen, the relationship seems to hold for all three newspapers. In other words, the producerist ideology of the time, which saw bureaucrats as lazy, as passively sitting in their arm-chairs, was something that existed in all three newspapers, i.e. across the political spectrum. However, the relationship
is strongest in *Borba*. This is at least in part a function of sample size, since the larger number of cartoons published in *Borba* creates statistically significant patterns. It should be kept in mind that the descriptive break-down presented in Table 2 showed that, for *Politika*, about 42 percent of cartoons that featured the functionary theme also featured the arm-chair theme, while for *Borba* the figure is 17 percent. Nevertheless, it would appear that the producerist styling of the functionary was not exclusive to any one particular newspaper.

[Figure 10 about here.]

And finally, Figure 10 presents a mosaic plot which pairs the functionary and the crowd themes. The results are rather inconclusive. The patterns for *Politika* and *Večernje novosti* are weak, but they point to a positive relationship. On the other hand, the results for *Borba* are the opposite, as evidenced by the reddish upper-right hand corner, and the blueish lower right hand corner for *Borba*. In any case, the pattern presented by Figure 10 seems weaker than the patterns in Figures 8 and 9. This means that, when it comes to the crowd theme, the only firm conclusion that can be offered is that it was much more likely to appear in *Politika*, as the results of Model 4 in Table 4 showed.

To summarize, what are the main differences between the three newspapers? *Politika* showed less interest in the more traditional socialist trope of the blue-collar worker and began a transition to a new portrayal of the people as a collective crowd. In that respect it was the populist vanguard of the time, emboldening its readers to take to the streets. The other two newspapers were less innovative and stayed with the traditional worker-bureaucrat divide. This divide was populist too, but was more “old-fashioned” in its Marxist roots. And finally, the pairing of the functionary and the arm-chair theme, i.e. the main producerist element of the time, is not exclusive to any one newspaper.

**Discussion**

This article has had two goals: to contribute to the literature on Yugoslavia's terminal crisis and subsequent dissolution and to contribute to the literature on populism by highlighting how it can pair with producerism. In terms of the literature on Yugoslavia, most accounts of the break-up understandably focus on political elites. Even Serbia's anti-bureaucratic
revolution, a large protest wave that took place in 1988, has been viewed mostly through the lens of elite manipulation. This article has shown that a populist discourse existed in Serbia which cannot be explained by elite intervention. For example, one may say that *Politika* became a pawn of Milošević and this explains their cheer-leading attitude. However, the other newspapers analysed here were not instrumentalised in this way, and nevertheless featured a similar focus on populist and producerist imagery. In other words, a simplified vision of society as divided into the working people and parasitic and lazy bureaucrats is something that appears to be firmly entrenched in the collective world-view of the time. This orientation made it easier, and indeed quite natural, for popular mobilization to emerge on a large scale. The people were always being told that they were productive and the elites parasitic. This was emboldening them and building their confidence, even as the regime simultaneously limited avenues for meaningful political participation. This contradiction finally exploded in Serbia's anti-bureaucratic revolution.

In terms of the wider literature on populism, this article has emphasized the link between populism and producerism. Although populists worship “the people”, it is not always clear why such praise is warranted. Granted, providing an answer to this question may not be political necessary. Yet, this article has suggested that populism can become particularly potent if it couples with producerism, i.e. with folk theories about productive and unproductive work. The link between populism and producerism is something that has been brought up mostly in the context of nineteenth century America. Yet, the very different setting of socialist Yugoslavia in the 1980s would suggest that the link is of broader relevance.

In the Yugoslav case, producerist attitudes were derived in large part from the Marxist foundations of the communist regime. Ideas such as the labour theory of value and the base and superstructure model, once they trickled down into the conventional wisdom and the common sense of the time, lead to wide-spread beliefs about what constitutes productive and unproductive work. Even though this version of producerism is specific to a given time and place, the relevance of producerism persists so long as we live in a material civilization where the production and consumption of scarce goods continues to be of paramount value. In the neoliberal era, the blue collar worker may be replaced by the taxpayer or the small business owner, but the basic divide into productive and unproductive classes persists.

The fact that populism managed to maintain such a hold on the public sphere suggests that the crisis of socialist legitimacy
had, in a way, actually not gone far enough. The anti-bureaucratic revolution was not aimed against socialism or against the core ideas of the regime, as the later East European revolutions would be. Of course, the presence of populism was compounded by the authoritarian nature of the one-party regime. However, even sources furthest from the most aggressive political players (such as Politika) repeated a similar set of populist and producerist messages. A deeper crisis came only with external stimuli. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Yugoslav version of socialism came under doubt too. Of course, the rise of nationalism complicated this process as well.

It is curious that nationalism does not appear in the cartoons analysed here. After all, the wave of mass mobilization which took place was one in which Serbian national grievances played a large part, especially protesters' demands regarding the Kosovo issue. Yet, among the more common themes analysed here, there are none that would speak to the issue of Kosovo and the Serb-Albanian tensions that provoked many of the protests. An example can be provided of a cartoon that engages this problem more explicitly. Figure 11 (Večernje novosti, 14 September 1988, p. 2) shows a group of bureaucrats hiding behind a tree. They are trying to trap a two-headed black eagle, the symbol from Albania's flag. The bureaucrats are luring it with papers. This cartoon ridicules the bureaucratic manner of dealing with the alleged Albanian threat and suggests that a stronger antidote will be required. Papers and speeches will not suffice.

This cartoon shows how the populist language of the time might be able to accommodate nationalist concerns. The cartoon connects attacks on the bureaucracy with the struggle against allegedly insurgent Albanian nationalism. In this respect, populism can slide toward nationalism, as is often the case. Yet, the cartoons analysed here do not provide enough of an empirical basis to offer firm conclusions. The theme of the Albanian eagle, for example, appeared only three times in the 844 cartoons analysed here. The reason why there were so few cartoons with nationalist themes probably lies with political taboos which surrounded Serbian nationalism. In 1988, it was still viewed as too sensitive to openly talk about such issues. The Yugoslav state was built on a compromise of many nations – Tito's “brotherhood and unity” – and openly emphasizing the grievances of one nation was still politically unacceptable to many in the country.
Political taboos are not a characteristic solely of Yugoslav socialism or of communist regimes more generally. Political correctness guarantees that some exclusionary themes will always remain prohibited. In that case, one may try to locate “coded speech”, i.e. terms that stand in for the publicly unacceptable. This is sometimes referred to as “dog-whistle politics.” Such words can be properly deciphered only by those “in the know.” In that sense, the more politically acceptable populism of 1988 may have stood in for what the cartoonists really wanted to talk about, i.e. national tensions. But in this case, the analyst has to make the case that when a speaker says one thing they really mean something else, a position which is difficult to defend. For example, the theme of the protesting crowd, which Politika began to popularize in the second half of the protest wave, might be approached in this way. It may have provided cartoonists a way to talk about – and legitimize – the Serbian protests without explicitly mentioning their less defensible nationalist aspects. The crowd theme was ethnically neutral and politically correct. Yet, it is ultimately impossible to say whether cartoons had the intent of legitimizing nationalist protests in this way. Therefore, no firm conclusion can be offered with regard to the rise of nationalism in the Serbian public sphere. Yet, the switch from populism to nationalism and from class to nation is a common one in the history of populism (e.g. see Laclau 2005). It is therefore not very surprising that the same occurred in Serbia in the late 1980s.

To summarize, this article investigated the link between populism and producerism in the case of Serbia's “anti-bureaucratic revolution” of 1988. The data-set under observation consisted of about 800 cartoons from three different Serbian newspapers. The key theme that emerges from the analysis is the juxtaposition of the blue collar worker and the political functionary. The former is presented as productive and the latter as unproductive and parasitic. In particular, the functionary is often portrayed together with an arm-chair. In other words, he is an “arm-chair politician" (foteljaš) living comfortably while ordinary working people toil and struggle. While producerism has been investigated primarily in the case of late nineteenth century America, this article has emphasized a very different case, the late socialist setting of Yugoslavia in the 1980s. That producerism and populism appear to be coupled in such divergent cases suggests the wider relevance of the relationship. Populism can therefore be expected to gain particular strength if it is supported by producerist notions of who the productive and parasitic classes in a given society are.

References


Glaurdić, J. (2011) Vrijeme Europe: Zapadne sile i raspad Jugoslavije (Zagreb, Mate).


Table 1. Most frequent themes (out of 469 themes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Politika</th>
<th>Borba</th>
<th>Večernje novosti</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Functionary</td>
<td>281 (33.3 percent)</td>
<td>Functionary</td>
<td>Functionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>174 (20.6 percent)</td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
<td>Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ordinary man</td>
<td>158 (18.7 percent)</td>
<td>Protest sign</td>
<td>Ordinary man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
<td>86 (10.2 percent)</td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
<td>80 (9.5 percent)</td>
<td>Ordinary man</td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protest sign</td>
<td>72 (8.5 percent)</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>69 (8.2 percent)</td>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Pulpit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pulpit</td>
<td>54 (6.4 percent)</td>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>Sheep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flag</td>
<td>37 (4.4 percent)</td>
<td>Pulpit</td>
<td>Shepherd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>35 (4.1 percent)</td>
<td>Administrative clerk</td>
<td>Bread</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of cartoons: 844, 147, 546, 151
Table 2. Most frequent themes that appear with the “functionary” theme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Politika</th>
<th>Borba</th>
<th>Večernje novosti</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Worker</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>103 (36.7%)</td>
<td>22 (42.3%)</td>
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<td>Arm-chair</td>
<td>Worker</td>
<td>Pulpit</td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
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<tr>
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<td>9 (17.3%)</td>
<td>29 (17.9%)</td>
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<td>Pulpit</td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
<td>Pulpit</td>
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<tr>
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<td>45 (16.0%)</td>
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<td>Crowd at protest</td>
<td>Protest sign</td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
<td>Ordinary man</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36 (12.8%)</td>
<td>9 (17.3%)</td>
<td>21 (13.0%)</td>
<td>7 (10.4%)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Ordinary man</td>
<td>Papers</td>
<td>Ordinary man</td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
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<tr>
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<td>27 (9.6%)</td>
<td>8 (15.4%)</td>
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<td>Večernje novosti</td>
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<td>----------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Functionary</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(59.2 percent)</td>
<td>(45.0 percent)</td>
<td>(64.3 percent)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Crowd at protest</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16.1 percent)</td>
<td>(25.0 percent)</td>
<td>(13.9 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arm-chair</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(12.1 percent)</td>
<td>(25.0 percent)</td>
<td>(9.6 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Protest sign</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(10.3 percent)</td>
<td>(20.0 percent)</td>
<td>(8.7 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bread</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(6.9 percent)</td>
<td>(20.0 percent)</td>
<td>(7.8 percent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of cartoons</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>115</td>
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Table 4. Logistic regression models

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<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Odds ratio</td>
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<td>Functionary theme</td>
<td>0.664**</td>
<td>(0.216)</td>
<td>1.943</td>
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<tr>
<td>Worker theme</td>
<td>0.676**</td>
<td>(0.212)</td>
<td>1.964</td>
<td>-1.891***</td>
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<td>Ordinary man theme</td>
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<td>(0.276)</td>
<td>0.217</td>
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<td>Crowd at protest theme</td>
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<td>(0.313)</td>
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<td>Arm-chair theme</td>
<td>1.806***</td>
<td>(0.311)</td>
<td>6.086</td>
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<td>Newspapers</td>
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<td>Borba</td>
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<td>Control variables</td>
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<td>Number of themes in cartoon</td>
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<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>2.257</td>
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<td>Cartoon with text (0=without text)</td>
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<td>(0.247)</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>-3.725***</td>
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<td>Chi squared (degrees of freedom)</td>
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<td>(9)</td>
<td>170.13***</td>
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<td>Log likelihood</td>
<td>-410.085</td>
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<td>-344.384</td>
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Note: Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.
Figure 1. Vecernje novosti, November 17th 1988, page 2.
Figure 2. Network of co-occurrence for all three newspapers.)
Figure 3. *Borba*, June 1st 1988, page 2. “It’s time to make some progress!”

Figure 4. *Borba*, October 17th 1988, page 11. “What if I resigned?”
Figure 5. *Politika*, August 5th 1988, page 1. “Call an ambulance! A man has fallen into the minus!”

Figure 6. *Politika*, September 12th 1988, page 10.
Figure 7. *Politika*, September 23rd 1988, page 16.
Figure 8. Mosaic plots for functionary and worker themes

Figure 9. Mosaic plots for functionary and arm-chair themes
Figure 10. Mosaic plots for functionary and crowd themes

Figure 11. Vecernje novosti, September 14th 1988, page 2.