

“We/Us” vs. “Them/Others”

The Case of the “Front National” (FN) and the
“Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs” (FPÖ)

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1) “The people” in populist rhetoric

Populists split society into two antagonistic groups: “the people” and “elites”
(M.Conovan)

The people	Elites
Majority Homogeneous A work force	Minority Heterogeneous Lazy

Generally, populists consider that we live in a “**false**” democracy governed by “elites” and not by “the people”. They ask for “**more**” democracy and want to oust all intermediaries.

Negative identity dominates the populist rhetoric. It’s defined “in opposition to” other identity emphasizing differences, boundaries, exclusion and rejection.

2) The removal of social boundaries in favour of a people/elite opposition

- **Elites:** EU, banks, financial markets, international societies, mainstream parties
- **The people:** attitude to work, love of mother country,...
- **Democratic tools:** referendums, proportional representation, direct democracy
- “In democracy, I believe that the people are always right” (Marine Le Pen March 2017)
- “My supporters are the people. We shouldn’t be afraid of the people” (Norbert Hofer 2017)
- “The people are job-less people who are fighting to find a job, craftsmen, employees who are struggling to keep their jobs, pensioners, with small pensions, workers who are striving to build wealth, families who are raising their children, officials who believe in the state, soldiers, policemen” (Marine Le Pen 2016)

The identity of “the people” and its unity represent its strength and found its sovereignty

3) The affirmation of cultural boundaries in favour of an opposition between natives to a country and foreigners

- **Immigration:** ignorant, criminal, increasing insecurity, low level of education,...
- **Islam:** violence, forced marriages, oppression of woman, submission,...
- **Assimilation/integration:** protectionism, control of national boundaries, sovereignty jobs,...
- “Religion should be a person private affair. No more kippas, no more turbans, no more headscarves, no more bears in the workplace” (Dominique Martin 2016)
- Communitarianism favours the extension of a way of life which is foreign to the French civilization. French traditions cannot be violated” (FN-Party Programme)
- “The headscarf impedes our democracy and our rule of law. We don’t want sharia in Austria. Any relaxation would mean capitulation to Islamic terrorism” “The cross is part of our culture and tradition therefore it shouldn’t be forbidden” (Heinz-Christian Strache 2017)
- “National, religious and cultural boundaries are often insurmountable” (Heinz-Christian Strache 2016)

Multicultural society challenges identity. It disrupts the separation between a “we” and a “them”. “Foreigners” should be banned or made invisible

4) Who are “the people”?

The people / Elites

- FN and FPÖ would like to be the spearhead of a “real” democratic project built for and by the people (“Elites” have taken power away from the people”).
- The people can be defined through values. Despite their diversity, “the people” are unified.
- Unity and majority stand alongside the idea of “truth”

Native / Foreigners

- As “the people” possess the truth, crises and threats cannot come from internal factors of society. They are necessarily external
- Any foreigner must be banned or rendered invisible.
- The defence of a pure nation hasn’t gone away (Race / culture / religion)

“The people” may be an abstract term, it is nevertheless a core element of a particular vision of the world within the rhetoric of the FN and the FPÖ:

Nativism