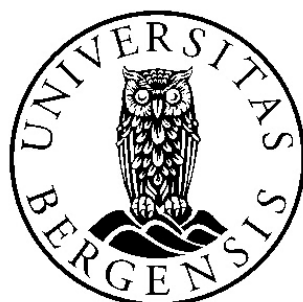


Populism and the pandemic

Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro leading the country in
times of COVID-19

Pernille Fjørtoft Grøsvik



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University of Bergen

Abstract

While there are many studies on the buzz-word populism, there are far fewer studies on how populism affects crisis management. When the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 disease a global pandemic on March 11th, no one knew that Latin America would be declared the epicentre of the pandemic by WHO on May 26th, and still be the epicentre over a year later. Although Brazil is a relatively advanced state compared to most of its Latin American neighbours, the first half of 2020 with the pandemic proved challenging for Brazil. Brazil performed worse than what could be expected in terms of deaths and infected, given its level of medical expertise.

Previous research defines populism in two main categories; one school of thought referred to as the ideational approach views populism as a thin ideology which gets adopted by a leader who already possesses a main ideology. Populism thus becomes a strategic approach, supplementing an addition underlying ideology. The second school of thought to understanding populism, is the Essex school which understands populism to be a discourse, where the pure people versus the corrupt elite are the core of what constitutes populism. I adopt the ideational approach in this study. Studying COVID-19 had me face challenges given its ongoing character, in addition to the nature of the pandemic this study is performed during. I could not travel to Brazil, nor conduct interviews. Given the limitations, the study analyses a large sample of qualitative data: 6325 Brazilian newspaper publications. After analysing and structuring the policy responses from Bolsonaro chronologically, I looked into what constituted Brazil's populist President Jair Bolsonaro's crisis management in his response to COVID-19 via McKee et al. (2020) four mechanisms of populism; (1) Blaming outsiders and victims, (2) Contempt for institutions, (3) Denialism and (4) Suspicion of elites.

Contrary to what was assumed, Brazil did experience large numbers of deaths and infected compared to neighbouring countries. My findings indicate that Bolsonaro's crisis handling showed large signs of his populist approach, which in turn I found to be marked by blaming outsiders and victims, contempt for institutions, denialism, and suspicion of elites. A report for the Universidade de São Paulo concludes that Bolsonaro and his government actively worked for the virus to spread, wanting it to resume the normal economic activity the pandemic threatened, as soon as possible.

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This master's thesis is dedicated to independent journalism and the crucial but deadly job the worlds journalists are doing while providing the public with truthful information. A special note is to be given to women journalists, who face twice the level of danger as their male colleagues.

Bergen, July 2021.

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List of Acronyms

WHO	World Health Organization
COVID-19	Corona virus disease 2019
STF	Supreme Tribunal Federal
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

We enter 2020 and had the problem of the pandemic which, in my understanding, was overrated.
- Jair Bolsonaro. (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 90).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Setting the stage

The notorious "wet market" in the Chinese city Wuhan selling fresh meat, seafood and live exotic wildlife became famous as it was pointed out as the source of the COVID-19 virus outbreak (MacQueen, Farache and Grigore 2020, 285). The COVID-19 virus is close in resemblance to other viruses found in horseshoe bats and is believed to originate from this type of bat, and then transmitting possibly via an intermediary host such as a pangolin (World Organisation for Animal Health 2020).¹ According to the *Financial Times*, the hashtag "Wuhan Sars" was trending on a Chinese blog by December 30th, as it became censored (Kynge, Yu and Hancock, 2020).² The news agency *Associated Press* reported that the Chinese President Xi Jinping's political repression allegedly made officials more hesitant to report cases without authorisation from the top (2020). Medical staff faced punishment for warning about the disease, and as a result no new cases were reported for almost two weeks from January 5th.

Fast forward to January the 10th 2020, The Fudan University in Shanghai published via the World Health Organisation their findings of the new virus being in the same family as the SARS coronavirus.³ On the 12th of January, the WHO declared, being "reassured" by the quality of the ongoing investigations that "the government reports that there is no clear evidence that the virus passes from person to person" (World Health Organization 2020a). However, things quickly escalated, and as President Xi made his first public comment on the virus on January the 20th, he stressed that it needed to be taken seriously (Associated Press 2020). Chinese epidemiologist Dr. Zhong Nanshan announced that the virus was indeed transmissible from

¹ The preference is throughout the paper to use the capitalized version: "COVID-19" when writing about the coronavirus, rather than "COVID-19" or "COVID-19". This is consistent with the World Health Organization's use of the abbreviation and its use in scientific papers (World Health Organization 2020d).

² MacQueen, Farache and Grigore argue that once the virus was first identified in late November 2019, Chinese doctors denied and suppressed information about the virus for at least three weeks (2020, 285).

³ SARS is short for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. It was first identified during an outbreak emerging in China in 2003, that spread to 4 other countries. The SARS virus is airborne and can spread through small droplets of saliva in a similar way as a cold or an influenza. It can also spread indirectly via surfaces that have been touched by someone infected with the virus (World Health Organization 2020b).

person to person (McQueen, Farache and Grigore 2020, 286). Just three days later, on January 23rd Wuhan was set under tight absolute lockdown suspending all public transport and air links out of the city (McQueen, Farache and Grigore 2020, 286).

After the initial spread in Wuhan and China, the outbreak quickly spread across the globe the first months of 2020 (The Visual and Data Journalism Team 2020). Italy was hit first in Europe with what became a very grave impact (Spinelli and Pellino 2020, 785).

1.2 Introducing the thesis

"When the history of the COVID-19 pandemic is written, it will be possible to identify many individual decisions by politicians that influenced its course" (McKee et al. 2020, 2). The International press have given Brazil, a country populated by more than 210 million people, much attention during the COVID-19 pandemic. The spotlight is often on the well-known populist President: Jair Bolsonaro who has dealt with the pandemic by denying its seriousness and downplaying the necessity to impose preventive measures to avoid spread. This makes the question: *How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?* Populism and crisis management is what the thesis aims at shedding light on, as I will study Brazil and Bolsonaro's COVID-19 response.

The COVID-19 pandemic is frequently described as the gravest and most comprehensive public health crisis the world has faced in the past century (Bol et al. 2020; Lasco 2020, 1417; Toshkov, Yesilkagit and Carroll 2020).⁴ And as the virus has evolved and been spread leaving no continent untouched, it has affected every part of social and political life. When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic on March the 11th of 2020 (Al-Dabbagh 2020, 1-2) governments all over the world were facing an immense challenge putting their institutional, organizational, and political structures to a great test. We can only imagine the limitless consequences the pandemic will have in the years that will follow on the economy, health and also the way states are governed and the way we perceive power. While containment measures were implemented to a varying degree in terms of effectiveness and strictness, Østebø

⁴ "COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. "CO" stands for corona, "VI" for virus, and "D" for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as "2019 novel coronavirus" or "2019-nCoV". The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold" (Bender 2020).

and Bye argue that COVID-19 may still prove to have a long-lasting effect in Latin America (2020, 2). Being already marked by economic disarray and political instability (Østebø and Bye 2020, 2) Latin America was declared the epicentre of the pandemic by WHO on May 26th, 2020 (Reuters 2020). Latin America is still the epicentre in June 2021 (Osborn 2021). Projections suggest that Latin American economies will be among the most affected by the halt in global trade and consumption caused by the pandemic. In many of the Latin American countries, the pandemic has put a stop to democratic processes such as scheduled elections in Bolivia and plebiscite in Chile. In federal Brazil, the central government's handling of the crisis has been a definite contribution to a severe political crisis (Østebø and Bye 2020, 2).

From the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, Brazilian President Jairo Bolsonaro encouraged people to gather and protest against the containment measures such as social isolation, asking people to break the rules set by for example governors. Bolsonaro also frequently claiming that the reactions and measures are taken globally and by Brazilian governors were unnecessary (McQueen, Farache and Grigore 2020, 296).

Why study populist regime's response to COVID-19?

"There appears to be a striking correlation between countries led by politicians who support populist messages and poor performance in responding to COVID-19" (McKee et al. 2020, 1). McKee et al. argue in his "Are Populist Leaders Creating the Conditions for the Spread of COVID-19?" from July 2020 that it appears clear how some political leaders have performed much better than others (1). By exemplifying with among others Brazil, McKee et al. furthermore argue that populist leaders are among those who have performed worst, as they tend to: "blame "others" for the pandemic, such as immigrants and the Chinese government; deny evidence and show contempt for institutions that generate it; and portray themselves as the voice of the common people against an out-of-touch elite" (2020, 1). Finally, McKee et al. find that populist leaders appear to undermine an effective response to COVID-19, which in turn may secure the populist leader's political gain as history has shown how populist leaders can benefit from suffering and ill health (2020, 1).

Kavakli argues that: "When designing public policies against a pandemic, policymakers have to weigh the health benefits of preventive measures against their economic and social costs"

(2020, 3). In 2020 several highly populated and large countries in the Americas were led by populists. Both in the case of The United States of America, Brazil, and Mexico.

My motivation to look more closely at how governments in Latin America have meet COVID-19 is the impact the virus will have on our societies in the time that follows. We need to learn more about the effectiveness of handling a crisis like COVID-19. The pandemic is not the first nor will it be the last to emerge and challenge our ways of ruling and managing states and nations. As Gerring states "Social science is a species of practical knowledge (..) if social scientists cannot tell us something useful about the world, then they (we) are serving very little purpose at all" (2012, 69). By Gerring's words, this study aims at providing useful information on important and impactful aspects of our society: how have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?

1.3 Research question

The topic is based on political behaviour, specific populism in an extreme form and a new COVID-19 twist. I seek to shed light on populist government actions in response to COVID-19. My research question is: *How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?* Given that my case is Brazil, I have formulated a more specific sub-question to limit and clarify: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?*

My reason and motivation to study Bolsonaro and his managing during COVID-19 in Brazil is largely based on pure curiosity and a genuine will to understand just what kind of impact his populist take have had on COVID-19. Brazil is a diverse country both in terms of population and geography, and much is at stake at the hands of one person: Bolsonaro.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

From start till finish, the main aim of this study and thus this thesis will be to shed light on Bolsonaro, being a populist, and his response to COVID-19 in Brazil, answering my posed research question: *How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?* And the sub-question: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?* The thesis is structured into five chapters.

The first chapter paves the way for the thesis by introducing, clarifying, and informing on what to expect of the thesis in the sense of content and aim. The introduction includes a short section on background, providing some perspective on where the relevant literature stands and some circumstantial understanding of the evidence to come. The second chapter is dedicated to a thorough theoretical framework, assessing and considering the relevant literature, theoretical perspectives, and arguments on why the posed research question at hand is relevant. Once the theoretical framework is laid down, the applied methodological approach is explained and argued for in the third chapter. The methodological understanding is followed by the empirical analysis starting with a descriptive section of the case, before several analytical sections of the overall analysis are presented, discussed, and considered. The thesis is ended with a last chapter on concluding remarks, including findings, thoughts, and the road ahead for populism research.

1.5 Previous findings in the literature

In his "Did Populist Leaders Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic More Slowly? Evidence from a Global Sample", Kerim Can Kavakli (2020, 2) argues that there is a large literature on the effects of ideology regarding the management of public health. However, there are very few systematic studies on how ideology has shaped country responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The contribution provided by Kavakli brings forth the first analysis on the relationship between government ideology and different responses to the COVID-19 pandemic using new and up-to-date data on government ideology for a large sample of countries (Kavakli 2020, 3).

As COVID-19 is a recent phenomenon to be happening, there are not abounding studies on COVID-19 within comparative politics. Nevertheless, there are some important exceptions. Among others, the contributions by Frey, Chen, and President (2020); Kavakli (2020) as well as Tashkov, Yesilkagit and Carroll (2020) are noticeable. Frey, Chen, and President (2020) investigate determinants of state responses to COVID-19 by focusing on a country's regime type (level of democracy). Kavakli (2020) looks into the determinants of state responses to COVID-19 by studying the government ideology, both economic and populist ideology. As for Tashkov, Yesilkagit and Carroll (2020) they give attention to the role of government ideology (excluding populism).

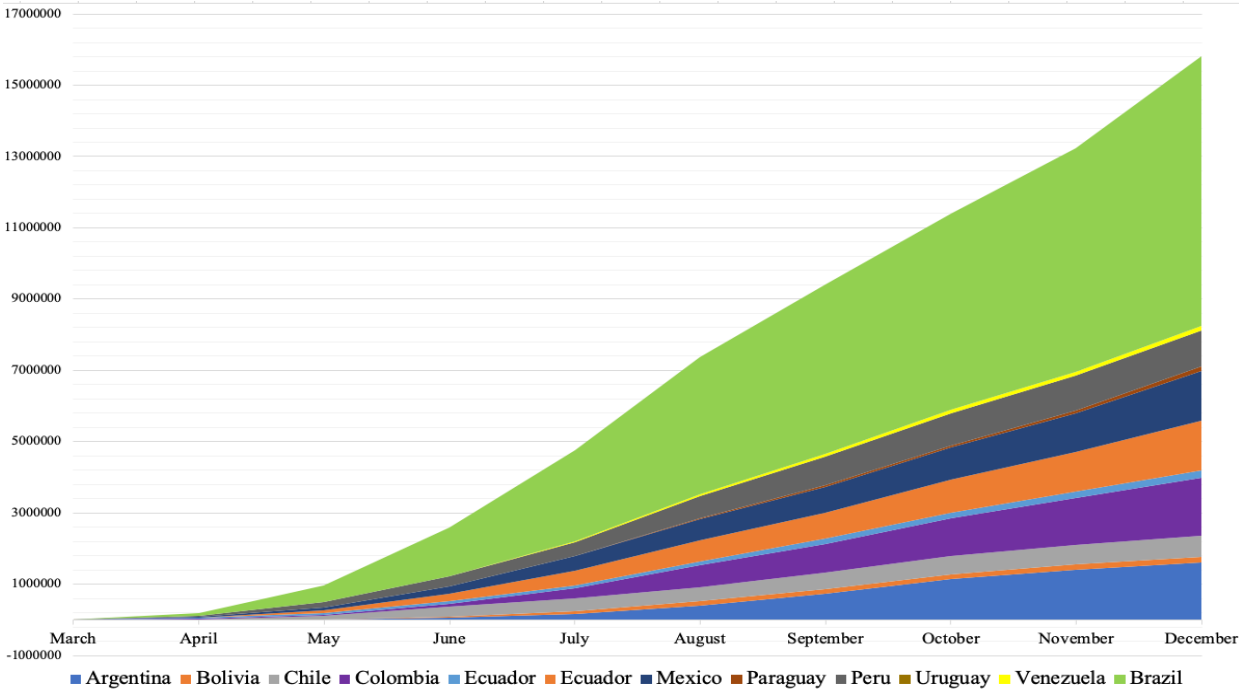
In addition to the mentioned studies, the contribution from McKee et al. (2020) also provides interesting insight. McKee et al (2020) categorize four potential mechanisms of populism and COVID-19 spread: blaming outsiders and victims, contempt for institutions, denialism, suspicion of elites. I will return to these mechanisms for further attention.

1.6 COVID-19 in Latin America

Given how new a phenomena COVID-19 is, the pandemic is not something thoroughly examined in scientific studies, which limits what certain knowledge we can understand about the pandemic. What we however can say, is that the pandemic may be viewed as a phenomenon that enhances already existing challenges in a society, such as inequality and uneven access to health and financial security:

The pandemic is exposing and intensifying deep pre-existing and intersecting structures of inequality across geographical scales, as lesser developed countries and marginalized communities are hardest hit by both the health crisis and the cascading economic crisis and will have the most difficult road to recovery in its aftermath (Finn, Pope and Sarduy 2020, 167).

Figure 1.1: Cumulative growth of COVID-19 cases in Latin America.



Included in figure 1.1 are ten countries with the highest number of cases, through December 31st, 2020. Based on publicly available data from the World Health Organization (2020f).

In the case of Latin America, scholars argue that COVID-19 may still prove to have a long-lasting effect in the region given it being already marked by economic disarray and political instability (Østebø and Bye 2020, 2). Latin America still is and has been the epicentre of the pandemic since 26th, 2020 (Boadle 2020; Osborn 2021). The economic projections suggest that Latin American economies will be among the most affected by the halt in global trade and consumption caused by the pandemic. What these numbers indicate is the size of the consequences we will be facing in the time to come. Unprecedented drop-offs in the important tourist industry have already been affecting the national economics throughout the Caribbean (Gaffney and Eeckels 2020, 308). Several pre-existing critical situations and crisis have eroded due to the additional "pressure" COVID-19 have resulted in.

This is the case for the humanitarian situation at the U.S-Mexico border (Slack and Heyman 2020, 334) and the crisis at the Colombia-Venezuela borderland (Idler and Hochmüller 2020, 280). Furthermore, the challenge of climate change, neo-colonialism (Declét-Barreto 2020) as well as the indigenous populations across the region and their ill-treatment and absence of being prioritized (Abizaid, Panduro and Egusquiza 2020, 202). The different approaches taken by the different governments in Latin America have been ranging from denialism and conspiracy theory to economic opportunism and disaster capitalism, to international medical solidarity, to coordinated health and political effort with positive outcomes (Finn, Pope and Sarduy 2020, 173). In Latin America, religious institutions have played an important role by contributing to maintaining social distancing and quarantine, however, in other cases, religious institutions have undermined these efforts (Oliveira et al. 2020, 274).

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the following chapter, I lay down the theoretical framework for this study. Firstly, key concepts will be presented which will be followed by a revision of the relevant and central literature. There are mainly two schools of thought on populism, which will both be accounted for. The two different schools are The Ideational Approach and The Essex School. Both consider populism to be a form of resistance or oppositional politics with the potential to pose a serious challenge to the status quo (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 19). My theoretical argument for which school of thought I wish to focus on, will presented lastly.

2.1 Understanding populism

Populism is a contested element, understood in different ways. The following sections will account for some of the different views and aim at shedding light on what populism is, the different schools of thoughts and how they differ.

2.1.1 What is populism?

"Populism is among the most widely used but poorly understood political concepts of our time" (Taggart 2002, 62). Populism is understood as a system of beliefs that underlines actions of political agents, structured around a vertical down/up axis referring to power, representing some sort of "underdog". Populism is also understood as a strategy and may be used as a strategy to gain power, and parties once in power may not remain "as" populist as first assumed (De Cleen, Glynos and Mondo 2018, 652). Similarly, Weyland state that populism may be used as a strategy to attract voters and to maintain their support (2001, 14). The core to answering what populism is seems to be the us-them/elite-the people/up-down aspect. Kurt Weyland (1999, 381-384) argues that populism is when a leader addresses a heterogeneous mass who is ready to be mobilized, that feels excluded, and that the populist interacts directly and personally, using his/her party or apparatus as a personal instrument or vehicle. "Populism" is a concept with different interpretations and scholars disagree on how useful the concept is, and what meaning it has. Yet there seem to be disagreements on what constitutes populism. This chapter is dedicated to giving insight on what populism is, and debate around the different ways of understanding populism.

Scholar Juan Grigera presents a critique of how the term "populism" or a "populist" have been used in a Latin American context. He presents the claim that the term has been used to describe almost any government, even neoliberal ones from the 1990s: "This has been reproduced in the academic context, sometimes making the analytical value of the concept worthless" (Grigera 2017, 442). Kurt Weyland on the other hand presents what he portrays as a clarification of a contested concept in his "Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American politics" (2001). Weyland argues that "many scholars regard populism as a useful, even indispensable, concept in elucidating Latin American politics" (2001, 1). In addition to that, Weyland state that populism may be used as a strategy to attract voters and to maintain their support (2001, 14). Furthermore, the notion that populism research is facing a fundamental challenge in the need to seriously reflect on the language games developed around the ideological uses of "populism" within academic and media discourse, is being raised in the literature (Stavrakakis 2017, 526).

The existing theory problematises both the state of the current research on populism, as well as the content and priorities that have been made in studying the phenomena of populism. Populism is viewed as a phenomenon violating or transgressing an established order of how politics is *properly, rationally, and professionally* done (Stavrakakis 2017, 542). The American historian Comer Vann Woodward argues, by summing up the debate on American populism from 1950 throughout the 1970s, stating that "Populism" is understood as an incarnation of whatever violated the established order of things has been popularized through mainstream media and shared by political and academic (since the 1950s) (Stavrakakis 2017, 542). Another critique of populism studies is that much of the debate on populism suffers from a bias and that we need to question the dominant euro-centric approaches and reconsider our understanding of democratic political subjectivity in times of crisis (Stavrakakis 2017, 526).

Stavrakakis being a considerable scholar with several impactful publications on populism, makes the distinction between inclusionary and exclusionary populism: "in inclusionary populism, "the people" operates as a fluid "empty signifier" without a fixed signified, while in exclusionary populism it usually refers back to a phantasmatic transcendental signified, (the nation, race, etc.)" (2017, 530). Stavrakakis furthermore argues that inclusive populism creates a political space arranged mostly vertically (up/down, high/low), contrary to exclusionary populism which happens in a horizontal sphere (insider/outsider) (2017, 530).

2.1.2 Two different main approaches to populism

As we now have a better understanding of what populism is as a whole, I in the following section, I examine the two main different ways of perceiving populism. The section is therefore dedicated to the two different school of thoughts on populism. The "Did somebody say populism? Towards a renewal and reorientation of populism studies" by Jonathan Dean and Bice Maiguashca from 2020 will be used as a path of thought throughout this literature review. The Essex School, as well as The Ideational Approach, are what I consider to be the two dominant schools of thought within populism research In this part of the thesis, I further examine the existing literature on populism.

THE ESSEX SCHOOL

The first school of thought that I wish to give attention to, is brought to us by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987a; Laclau and Mouffe, 1987b). With their *discourse theory*, the so-called Essex School, have influenced the mainstream section of populism research (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 306). Discourse theory has played an important role in studying populism, and especially in the UK and European perspective have Mouffe and Laclau been made use of by scholars. The Essex school of discourse theory emerged mainly from Laclau's *On Populist Reason* published in 2005, in addition to the attendant themes (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 17). Noticeable thinkers working within the Laclauian tradition include (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017; Mouffe 2005; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014; Thomassen 2015).

Populism is a dichotomic discourse in which "the people" are juxtaposed to "the elite" along the lines of a down/up antagonism in which "the people" is discursively constructed as a large powerless group through opposition to "the elite" conceived as a small and illegitimately powerful group. Populist politics thus claim to represent "the people" against an "elite" that frustrates their legitimate demands and presents these demands as expressions of the will of "the people" (2017, 306).

Challenging conceptualisations of populism builds on a discourse- theoretical definition, which emphasizes how populism, through discourse constructs "the people" through an antagonistic pitting of "the people" against "the elite" (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 310). In a discourse-

theoretical perspective, popular politics is being organised by a particular political logic, which Glynos and Howarth argue is being constructed and named by the analyst (2007, 136). Looking at populism with this in mind, imply identifying how populism is used to interpellated and mobilise subjects, to formulate demand and contest existing regimes or underpin power relations (Glynos 2008, 278). A noticeable aspect existing literature on populism emphasizes is the special structure of "down/up", dominantly mentioned as a "basic" when understanding and studying populism. Is it useful in the sense that it allows for a distinction between populism's appeal and other discourses and their appeals, such as nationalism (Canovan 2005; Demertzis 2006; Mény and Surel 2000). By exemplifying with nationalism and populism, populism aiming at "the people" as the underdog compared to "the elite" raised above the people, nationalists focus on the love for "the nation" and the content for "the national other" (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 312).

THIN IDEOLOGY – THE IDEATIONAL APPROACH

The second school of thought is referring to populism as "thin ideology", named the Ideational approach.⁵ Is impossible to write about populism without mentioning Cas Mudde, who often appears along with his co-author Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser, who: "constitutes the most widely cited body of work on contemporary populism" (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 13). Despite that the meaning of populism has been highly contested (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, 382) the ideational approach (that I hereby will refer to this approach as) is thriving on a long list of scholars who make use of it as their key starting point (Gerodimos 2015; Kessel 2015; March 2007; Otjes and Louwerse 2015; Pappas and Kriesi 2015; Rooduijn and Akkerman 2015; Rooduijn and Pauwels 2011; Stanley 2008). At the core of the ideational approach lies the way they define populism concerning ideology:

populism is best defined as a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people and 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté general* (general will) of the people (Mudde 2005, 543).

⁵ The term «ideational» is a relatively new term, designed to “smooth over differences among competing scholars” (Hawkins 2019, 58).

Deriving from this, we may understand populism as a "mental map" being accompanied by particular discourses making people understand the world and articulate their grievances and aspirations (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013, 7). Dean and Maiguashca understand Mudde and Kaltwasser's ideas to stem from a political determination and moral judgement that the well-being of "the people" is being trammelled by the special interests of a "corrupt elite", and that populism "embodies a defensive politics seeking to reclaim the putative rights of the common people, treated as a unified sovereign entity, against the demands and injunctions of an unaccountable ruling cadre" (2020, 13). Mudde and Kaltwasser understand populism as something that is showing signs of anti-establishment and that is justifying practices and/or policies that seek to appeal to the general will of the people, like plebiscites, and that respond to their "common sense" (2013, 15). The core concepts are simply put; the "pure people", the "corrupt elite" and "general will". And therefore, this *thin ideology* as the core feature and a name of this school of thought becomes a real-world phenomenon only when combined with thicker and more established "host" ideologies such as nationalism or socialism (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 13).

In contrast to the Essex school, the ideational approach takes a positivist approach to explain populism's causes and consequences, aiming at holding an objective understanding by using an array of tools from mainstream political science (Hawkins 2019, 57).

A more empirical view of the ideational approach puts it in an interesting perspective. When the approach is applied to real-world cases, we might see populism as driven by the passionate exhortations and gestures of high-profile leaders for example Hugo Chavez, Marine Le Pen, Jorg Haider (Jagers and Walgrave 2007, 319-345; Mudde 2007; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 147-174). Such leaders are typically presented as strong and enterprising (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 13) however Mudde argues that regardless of charismatic leaderships frequently being present when describing populist politics, the fact that the leadership is charismatic is not a necessary component of populism, as one might often think or regard without further question (Mudde 2005, 556). According to the logic of the ideational approach, populism is a phenomenon constructed through a hierarchical relationship between the political elite/leaders, and "the people". In the ideational approach, "the people" is characterised as withdrawn, as Mudde argues by separating latent populist followers from other "protest prone"

groups, by stating that latent populist followers need to be mobilized by populist actors, instead of taking initiative themselves (Mudde 2005, 548).

2.1.3 Assessing of the two different approaches to populism

To say the obvious, populism by Laclauian tradition (The Essex School) as opposed to those committed to Mudde`s understanding (The Ideational Approach), is differently proposed. The latter tradition on its hand practices an *ontic* vision.⁶ This means that they analyse politics which sees it as an already constituted terrain whose meaning and direction can be objectively measured and mapped which might even be predicted with sufficient conceptual tools (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 18). On the other hand, the Laclauian tradition views politics as a more ongoing, unpredictable, and contingent play of difference. As game-defining fixed meanings which thus cannot be studied as an already constituted entity.

And although it is true that the interplay and tension between these two ontological logics of the political are galvanized and sustained through the concrete discursive actions (which include words, symbols and practices) of both charismatic leaders and grass-roots mobilizations, the trajectory and fate of any populist moment is not reducible to them, dependent as it is on a range of discursive contestations and contingent events that far exceed the intentions of individuals (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 18).

THREE MAIN DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHTS

We may map out three main differences between the two schools of thought discussed. **(1)** Firstly, the Essex school more often consider populism to benefit the democracy and is as a school of thought more normative than the ideational approach (Hawkins 2019, 65). By referring to Mouffe (1999) and Laclau and Mouffe (2004), Hawkins argues that scholars of the Essex school view populism: "as the most practical means of achieving the subjective transformation of workers into a unified social class, arguing that it reflects a healthier

⁶ Ontic describes what is physical, real, or factually existing. In contrast, "ontological" (which is an adjective) describes what an entity is, whilst "ontic" (which is an adjective) describes whatever empirical knowledge that can be known about the entity (their arrangements, characteristics, properties, and behaviour) (Slaby 2019, 542).

"agnostics" form of democratic politics that facilitates the institutional transformation demanded by the radical project" (2019, 65). This difference in outlook on populism is a major difference between the two schools. On one hand, scholars of the ideational approach tend to take a more clinical approach when studying populism, they also view populism as a force leading to violation of liberal democratic principles frequently.

Whilst, on the other hand, the scholars of the Essex school are often critical both to social sciences as an objective enterprise as well as being more likely to embrace an activist model of scholarship (Hawkins 2019, 65). **2)** The second difference between the two approaches is their actual object of study and how they consider it to operate. Both schools argue for populism being a type of ideas different from ideology in it not consciously elaborating. However, the ideational approach collects more inspiration from a traditional and positivist point of view which makes it treat ideas as something exogenous or given, and its existence or rebirth is viewed as neither mysterious nor problematic (Hawkins 2019, 65). The Essex school is in contrast "sees these ideas as a larger matrix of cultures that shapes our social roles and evolves with other ideas and our material environment" (Hawkins 2019, 65). This is in line with a more Althusserian approach (Hawkins 2019, 65).⁷ Therefore, the Essex school is considered to place more focus on the discursive dimension of populism, as opposed to the content of populist ideas. The Essex school view populist ideas to be created by political leaders, and their empirical research is mainly qualitative showing the creation and interplay of populist frames in mass and elite language (Hawkins 2019, 66).

(3) The third and final main differentiation of the two schools that will be given notice here, is how scholars of the Essex school tend to be more restrictive in what historical movements or parties they label as populist, while the Ideational approach has a broader understanding of populism in a historical perspective (Hawkins 2019, 66). Ideational scholars characterise both left-wing and right-wing forces, including niche parties and failed movements, the Essex school

⁷The French philosopher Louis Althusser argues that ideology has a profound relationship with subjective experience. Althusser viewed the practices and beliefs inherent to ideology produce a sense of identity (Ryder 2015). Laclau and Mouffe have been highly inspired by Althusser and Michel Foucault when theorising how discourses offer citizens particular subject positions to identify with, as well as how the process of being interpellated by discourses construct individuals as subjects (Howard and Stavrakakis 2000, 12-13).

typically give the populist label to radical left-wing forces who are successful at reorienting masse identities and who gain political control (Hawkins 2019, 66).

CRITIQUE OF THE ESSEX SCHOOL

Scholars point to several limitations to The Essex school's approach to populism. Among others, the Essex School is being accused of conceptual conflation (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 18). Benjamin Arditì (2004, 140) claims that Laclau vacillates between an ontological and ontic conception of populism. Furthermore, if choosing to ignore this conceptual shrinkage for a moment, there is also the issue of the notion of populism as a manifestation of counter-hegemony as is suggested in The Essex School tradition that all oppositional or radical politics must be conceived as populist in nature. This is problematic, because if this is taken literally then populism loses any specificity of its own and becomes yet a different way of characterizing radical politics of all persuasions (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 18).

Given that Laclau thought of "populist reason" as constituted by a logic of the political, we may imagine that this trade-off is acceptable to Laclau despite not being what contemporary scholars using the term wish to imply (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 18). Deriving from that notion, it is argued that populism in the understanding of the Essex School is most often used to identify and defend a politic of the *political left* being oriented in plural, inclusive and egalitarian manner. Scholar Janis Stavrakakis (with others) (2017, 2018, 2020) has belonged to the Essex School, and Stavrakakis has not followed suit but argued that right-wing movements cannot be considered populist because the key point in their discourses revolve around the "nation" or "ethnicity" as opposed to "the people", regardless of Laclau who made it clear that what he referred to as the "ontic contents" of populism could never be predetermined and was open to articulatory practices from both the right and the left (Stavrakakis et al. 2017, 420-439). Dean and Maiguashca encourage us to look for, as well as to make a distinction, between right and left radical politics. Dean and Maiguashca furthermore argue that this aspect is obscured in the ideational approach where it does not receive as much explicit focus, furthermore this Essex School aspect of distinction "does not help us go much beyond this point when it comes to determining the specificity of populism concerning other instantiations of oppositional politics" (2020, 18).

A different yet related critique describing a tendency that damages the work of those scholars working in the Essex School according to Dean and Maiguashca is that the course of its operationalization the type of populism tends to first transform from a political logic to discourse and then to a series of rhetorical devices and utterances (2020, 18). Dean and Maiguashca (2020, 18) argue that this is the case, despite that Laclau emphatically and explicitly reject the idea to blend "discourse" with either language or ideology (Laclau 2005, 68). As evidence to this phenomenon, Dean and Maiguashca (2020, 19) point to how scholars of the Essex School tradition Stavrakakis and Katsambekis reduce the analysis of left-wing populism in Greece to overt references to "the people", in the discourses of the Greek party Syriza (Stavrakakis 2015, 273-280; Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014, 119-142).

CRITIQUE OF THE THIN IDIOLOGY- THE IDEATIONAL APPROACH

Mudde and his "thin ideology" definition of populism, strongly resembles the discourse-theoretical definition in its minimal character (De Cleen and Stavrakakis 2017, 311), and the approach that is described by Rooduijn is used by a wide variety of political scientists (2014, 582). However, there are still several aspects of the ideational approach, that have been criticised in the academic literature. Mainly conceptual and methodological problems with the ideational approach's concept of populism will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Firstly, the concern of the classification of populism as an *ideology*. Michael Freeden argues that the two concepts at the very core of the ideational approach; thin ideology, meet challenges when being put together. Freeden argues that "populism" has none of the necessary features of "ideology", regardless of being thin or thick (Freeden 2017, 3). Freeden describes populism as an "ideationally insubstantial fingerprint" (2017, 10). Dean and Maiguashca (2020, 13) build on Freeden's views and thoughts, adding that it should be acknowledged that the defining force shaping the content and form of populism is indeed the "secondary" or "host" ideology. Dean and Maiguashca state that it is this additional ideological understanding or characterisation of a regime or leader that defines "populist" purpose:

whether it be mobilizing people to action, constructing a template to make sense of the world or providing the basis for a broad national agenda, it is the substantive ideological visions of so called "populist leaders" (from right-wing to nationalist to socialist) that

do all the work in sustaining it and provide most of the explanation about it (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 13-14).

Luke March made this argument regarding the British left politics and the propensity to label it populist (2017, 282-303). Leaving be the doubts and critique of the conceptual coherence of populism in the ideational approach, methodological challenges also deserve our attention. One challenge that Dean and Maiguashca lay out is how scholars studying populism tend to shift their focus from ideology to the discursive content of a leaders "political talk", this being easier traced, coded, and quantified (2020, 14). Scholars such as Jagers and Walgrave show example of doing so in their "populism as political communication style" from 2007 (319-45), as they keep looking for references to the "people" or the "elite". Kriesi and Pappas argue that the reasoning behind this discursive focus is that it is the only way to operationalize ideology without adding another theoretical element to the definition (2015, 5). However logical, specific, and user-friendly this approach might be given its lexical analysis, such a "minimal" definition of populism might pose problems given what (how much) it could hold. Stijn Van Kessel addresses what he calls "degreeism", by arguing that given this minimal approach to defining populism, populism can potentially be present everywhere in different degrees (2014, 99-118). A similar critique with "degreeism" has been raised and said to be present in the other school of thought (The Essex school) when assessing Laclau (Thomassen 2015, 170).

Unless we can create and operationalize populism as a category "classifier" concept which serves to delimit a universe of populist actors (Kessel 2014, 100) it becomes less clear why we should give attention to populist actors whose actions represent an exceptional and enduring rendition of politics. These are problems emerging as the definition is minimal.

In addition to identifying some problems related to the minimalist definition of populism, there are also theoretical branches of the ideational approach, that aim at concretizing populism as a distinct phenomenon of politics. Jan-Werner Müller and Takis Pappas state that populism should be understood as a form of "democratic illiberalism" and thus treated with caution (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 14). In "What is populism?" Müllers describes populism as "a particular moralistic imagination of politics, a way of perceiving the political world that sets a morally pure and fully unified . . . people against elites who are deemed corrupt or in some way morally inferior" (Müller 2016, 19-20). Dean and Maiguashca argue that Müller sits in the ideational camp despite not deploying the term "ideology", by viewing populism as fuelled by attitudes,

beliefs and values giving meaning to a set of political practice (2020, 14). With similar features to Mudde's vision, Müller argues that populism is discovered by the manipulative self-appointed leader who seeks to gain trust and to represent misguided and angry people. Additionally, Müller adds emphasis to how people in a populist regime are being pitted against each other in a good vs. evil narrative. Müller indeed does see moral outrage as one of the lynchpins of populism (2016, 39).

Mudde and Müller share several similarities as we have seen, yet there are some aspects they disagree on. The most prominent feature where Müller differs from the ideational approach is when Müller insists on seeing anti-pluralism as a defining feature of populism, as opposed to Mudde who considers anti-elitism to be the core feature (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 15).

Yet another interesting thought in the ideational approach, is the literature on populism as a form of protest politics. It is not uncommon for political protest movements or various types of protest politics to portray the elites as the main root of evil as populism have no monopoly on this feature. However, it is only populists who unapologetically praise the virtues of a "highly exclusionary identity politics" where the "true" people are presented as outsiders as a threat to the popular will (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 15). Now, this anti-pluralism has some implicit consequences, and scholars argue that anti-pluralism poses a greater danger to democracy as it facilitates not only an illiberal democracy but even an authoritarian regime (Müller 2016, 141). The scholarly debate on how populism is a form of illiberal democracy is also addressed by Pappas (2015). He argues that populism fails to fulfil what he characterises as the three most fundamental principles of political liberalism; The acknowledgement of multiple divisions in society, The need to try reconciling such divisions via negotiated agreements and political moderations, The commitment to the rule of law as the protection of all minority rights (Pappas 2015). Explicitly connected to Mudde's definition of populism, Pappas (2014a) in his *Populist democracies: post-authoritarian Greece and post-communist Hungary* from 2014 defines populism as a world view where society is divided into the good (the people) and the bad (the elite) which in turn generates politics prone to confrontation, polarization and "political extremism" (1-23). One of the major challenges this poses to democracy, Pappa argues by exemplifying with Syriza and previous Greek governments, is that there becomes a dangerous situation where political centrist voices speaking out gets overwritten. In that sense, the

representation and diversity within a democracy are being discredited and ignored, Pappa states (2014, 8).

Furthermore, a different interesting aspect of Pappas literature on populism is the emphasis he gives to "the people" in studying their role as sustaining populism. He does so, by point to that populism do tend to thrive in countries without tradition or history of liberal political culture, and as a consequence of that the people will be less able and willing to act according to the "public good". In that way, Pappa argues (again exemplifying with Greece) that the people lack "social capital" for them to act rationally (2014b, 40).

Moreover, a different trajectory of thinking about populism exemplified by the work of Moffitt has emerged: preferring to conceptualize populism as a "style" of politics. Being understood as a distinct manner of representation in line with a "playbook", key features of this performance include the appeal to the people, an indictment of corrupt elites and a coarsening of political rhetoric Moffitt calls "bad manners", and an evocation of crisis securing the spotlight on the leader as he/she creates an urgent and crucial need for themselves and their political actions (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 16; Moffitt 2016). Within the ideational approach, scholars have been disagreeing on some elements of Mudde's conceptualisation.

Unlike Müller, yet similar to other scholars in the ideational approach, Moffitt argues that leaders choose to perform elements to a less extent with all of them embodying some of these features of populism at least some of the time (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 16). We might thus understand Moffitt as a scholar who indirectly is supporting the graded view of populism, as he argues that populism is an integral part of democratic politics with populism having both positive and negative democratic tendencies. Nevertheless, there is an understanding that populism is a fundamentally "opportunistic" approach to politics, whose only purpose is to gain power and therefore populism remains dangerous to any inclusive of the plural political project (Dean and Maiguashca 2020, 16). Mudde states that Moffitt`s arguments do not vary or build much further from or away from the ideational definition (Mudde 2017).

My theoretical argument is based on the ideational approach which conceptualized populism as a thin ideology. In this approach, the two defining characteristics of populism are: (1) the idea that society is divided into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, which are the "pure people" vs. the "corrupt elite", and (2) the idea that politics should be an expression of the

general will of society. The ideational approach is in my view the currently dominant approach taken in research on populism. Given my research question and study of the Brazilian President Bolsonaro, the ideational approach with its emphasis on the rhetorical "pure people" vs. "corrupt elite" is fitting to my case. The Ideational approach is well suited for the empirical study of populism and crisis management. Bolsonaro is known for rhetorical appealing to the masses, asking for support in a personalistic and direct way, saying things like "power is with the people" (Arcanjo 2020b, my translation). The logic of the Ideational Approach views the people as a group of populist followers who need to be mobilized by a populist actor (Mudde 2005, 548). The Ideational Approach considers right-wing politicians as populists as well as left-wing politicians, as opposed to the Essex school that traditionally only label left-wing politicians as populists. Furthermore, the Ideational approach puts emphasis on how a protest mass needs to be mobilized by a populist, not mobilize themselves. Therefore, adopting the ideational approach is the best choice given the subject of study.

2.2 Crisis

I have now provided a better understanding of populism and how it can be perceived differently. These following sections are dedicated to the crisis concept, how it is understood and studied as a phenomenon in relation to handling by governments, what kind of crisis COVID-19 is, and which role populism can play in crisis management. "Major crises strike at the core of both democracy and governance. Crises constitute challenges not only for capacity but also for accountability, legitimacy, representation and citizens' ability to get their demands met effectively" (Christensen and Lægreid 2020, 774).

2.2.1 Ruling Governments when crisis hits

How are governments supposed to react to a crisis?

"Crises constitute an ambivalent concept. It originates from ancient Greek medical and juridical discourses" (Koselleck 1988, 103). Historically, "crisis" has signified both a critical conjuncture (a meaning emanating from medical discourse) and a final judgment (a sense originating from the juridical field). Closer to our time, moving into the 20th century, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci became the first to capture the representation/discursive dimension of crisis (Hay 1999, 335). Among other things, Gramsci clarifies the ambivalent and largely

open character of the outcomes of the crisis. Namely formulating that crisis "consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born" (Gramsci 1971, 276). More recently within the field of political science, Colin Hay has further developed the characteristics and conceptual understanding of "crisis" (Stavrakakis et al. 2018, 7). Hay show signs of similarity to Kosselleck and provide the cohabitation of two distinct dimensions. "That of objective constriction leading a given system into a phase of instability with unpredictable consequences, on the one hand, and that of subjective intervention which signifies and represents this instability in particular ways" (Stavrakakis et al. 2018, 7). In relation to the case of this study, we may see COVID-19 as a phase of instability with unpredictable consequences, and populism something subjective which might intervene and possibly represent instability.

Christensen, Lægreid and Rykkja provide us with the notion that crisis management is a core government responsibility that is challenging to fulfil (2016, 887). A crisis might give rise to various types of challenges for public administration, depending on the nature of the crisis. Christensen, Lægreid and Rykkja argue that a general theory of how crises should be managed and by what type of organizations do not exist, and therefore it becomes necessary to distinguish among various types of crises (2016, 888). Furthermore, they argue that many crises are categorized by their causes, yet two other dimensions are crucial. First the degree of uncertainty and uniqueness of the crisis, and second the degree of transboundary features (Christensen, Lægreid and Rykkja 2016, 888). Building on that, we understand that "the most demanding crises are those that transcend administrative levels, sectors, and ministerial areas and at the same time are unique, ambiguous, complex and involve a lot of uncertainty" (Christensen, Lægreid and Rykkja 2016, 888).

2.2.2 The COVID-19 crisis

What kind of crisis is COVID-19?

"Dealing with crises means dealing with nightmares and nightmares become less of a threat if someone turn on the light. Classifying crises is the first step to keep them under control since they can be named and analysed." (Gundel 2005, 106). The presumably oldest and most common typology distinguishes between man-made (technological) and natural crisis (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1993, 2). A crisis may also usually be characterised by only one

attribute being fulfilled or not. For example, the distinction of whether the crisis is national or international, episodic or continuous crisis management (Gundel 2005, 108).

Despite the fact that COVID-19 is mostly being referred to as a health crisis, the COVID-19 is more than a health crisis. According to Hay (1996, 255) The pandemic is read as a health governance "crisis", as the policy and political responses to the COVID-19 public health threat evoke state power described as "the ability to identify, define and constitute crises". Also cited by (Walby 2015, 17; Vieten 2020, 7). Given the insight from what has been made an account for in this section, COVID-19 is regarded as a crisis.

2.3 Populism and crisis

With a better understanding of the crisis concept and having established that COVID-19 will be regarded as a crisis, the following sections will link together populism and crisis handling.

2.3.1 COVID-19 crisis and populism

Are populist regimes particularly vulnerable in terms of managing these types of crisis? Kavakli presents two important factors when aiming at understanding the link between government ideology and the state's COVID-19 response (2020, 3). The first, according to Kavakli, is to which extent a given government trusts health experts when they are warning about how many lives are at risk (2020, 3). This might prove to be a challenging task, as in the initial stages of a crisis the costs of preventive measures like jobs at risk, are real, but the damage and deaths that will be prevented are based on experts' projections (Kavakli 2020, 3). The latter consequently presents a more abstract situation, simply put. Hence, if trust is low then the government distrusting the experts are more likely to discount the risk and resist calls to take strong measures (Kavakli 2020, 3-4).

Now keeping this in mind, the string of thought takes us one step further by reflecting on how this distrust plays out within the different political ideologies. Given the explanation provided in section 2.1.1 on what constitutes populism, distrust toward elites is a defining feature of populism, and this distrust is naturally extended to distrust towards expertise. Deriving from Walby (2015, 17) and Hay (1996, 255) the meaning of crisis is *subjectively*

perceived and brought into existence through narrative and discourse. By looking at the 2008 financial crisis, Walby argues that *temporality* is highly relevant, as the crisis is identified with rapture and a state of exemption. It thus contrasts with more "normal" times (2015, 18). "*Crisis* operates as a signifier of a malaise conveying cracks, change, instability and lack of good governance" (Vieten 2020, 7). In order to fully understand what kind of crisis COVID-19 is, as well as providing a greater understanding of the discursive construction of what is exposed as a crisis, we should look at how we talk of a crisis, and that calling something a crisis is a powerful tool in itself, by framing something. Vieten stresses that the negative connotation of the previous "migrant crisis" and this current "public health crisis" is embedded in the falsification of cause and consequence of governmentality (2020, 7). Hall et al. (1978, 322) on the other hand, argue that crisis in this context endangers the possibility of another "moral-panic cycle".

A moral panic cycle refers to a situation where systemic crises are displaced ideologically via moral discourse aimed at placating social anxiety while, most importantly, prescribing the cause of the crisis itself as its solution . . . moral panic, often artfully turned into sour resentment, against usual suspects like the immigrants (Feldner 2014, 3).

Citing Feldner, Vieten (2020, 8) argue that this moral panic serves as a delusion that distracts from the cause of a crisis. Widespread anxieties and xenophobia might spread in the public when there is absence of good governance and as political elites respond to the immediate pandemic in a failing manner (Vieten 2020, 8). Scholars such as Mudde (2017); DeAngelis (2003) argue that xenophobia: the fear of "the other" as well as the perception as "stranger", rather than racism is associated with far-right populism. Vieten (2020) argue that xenophobia can be mobilised in times of crises, also during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Vieten exemplifies this by mentioning the 2008 financial crisis as a symptom of "capitalism in crisis". Furthermore, Feldner (2014) argue that in the run-up to the Brexit referendum in 2016, immigration was rhetorically linked to a social welfare crisis. Vieten (2020) argue that in the context of the economic, social, and ecological global public health crisis as is to be seen as a result of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is a space of opportunity in the current COVID-19 situation. The potential of a delusion in addition to blurred boundaries of fact and fiction encompassing the reading of a crisis makes the COVID-19 situation exploitable to populist propaganda (Vieten 2020, 6).

A different aspect that is necessary to address in relation to populism and COVID-19, is the media. Scholars who have studied populism, such as Jansen (2015); Zúquete (2015) and Mudde (2017) agree that populism is driven by a strong discontent towards elites. Now McKee et al. argue that populist politicians have a habit of positioning the media (particularly the fractions criticizing their politics or message) as members of the "corrupt elite" (2020, 3). Yet at the same time, experts need to rely on mainstream media platforms during the pandemic in order to generate public health awareness. It is this dynamic that creates an insidious pathway where populism may even facilitate the spread of COVID-19 (McKee et al. 2020, 3). A recent study showed findings on media consumption and COVID-19 conception found consuming mainstream media (such as NBC News and the New York Times) correlated with having accurate information about the lethality and protection from infection (Jamieson and Albarracín 2020, 1). Furthermore, the study showed a correlation between watching Fox News and supporting conspiracy theories, such as believing that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is exaggerating the seriousness of COVID-19 to undermine the presidency of Donald Trump (Jamieson and Albarracín 2020, 1).

2.4 How populism can affect COVID-19 Policy Response

The fact is that we are currently facing what without exaggeration might be the worst global crisis of a generation. Hence, a discussion and critical reflection involving the role and prospects of populism is extremely important – even urgent (Stavrakakis and Katsampekis 2020, 4). The relationship between "crisis" and populism have been a central topic in the relevant literature for several decades (Stavrakakis and Katsampekis 2020, 4). When Ernest Laclau published his *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory: Capitalism, Fascism, Populism* in 1977, this was one such contribution. Laclau state that some degree of crisis is a necessary precondition for populism, that populism cannot emerge without a crisis (175). Stavrakakis and Katsampekis argue that crisis is interesting in light of populism as a crisis operates as an opportune environment for the rise of populist actors (Stavrakakis and Katsampekis 2020, 4). Crisis usually designate moments that exaggerate socio-political divisions, create new rifts and potentially increase the distance between "people" and "elites", governments and the governed. In addition, populists themselves, in most cases, invoke and perform some notion of 'crisis' in their own discourse as they address popular grievances and frustrations with the hope

to unify and mobilise broader social strata against unresponsive political 'elites' that are rendered responsible for their troubles. Finally, such populist crisis narratives are not alone in the public sphere; they usually antagonise other, anti-populist crisis narratives, thus constituting a comprehensive analysis encompassing both camps a priority if one is to understand the socio-political stakes in a given conjuncture (Stavrakakis and Katsampekis 2020, 4).

2.4.1 Mechanisms of populism during COVID-19

As a takeaway from the comparison of the two schools of thought and what key aspects they have in common, in addition to the literature review on populism, I chose to underline four traits that might contribute to defining populism. These traits can be viewed as mechanisms that may have an impact on COVID-19. The four traits appear as presented by McKee et al. (2020) In the chapter dedicated to the analysis, these traits (hereby referred to as "mechanisms") will be used as a tool in the analysis when looking into how populism has influenced policy in times of COVID-19 as well as how governments have responded to the crisis of COVID-19. I present the four mechanisms and discuss them, on the following pages.

2.4.1.1 Mechanism (1): “Blaming Outsiders and Victims”

McKee et al. argue that it becomes necessary to look at populism in a broad sense when aiming to understand responses to COVID-19. Albertazzi and McDonnell define populism as an ideology that “pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous “others” who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice” (2008, 3).⁸ Mudde emphasises that the group populist addresses as outsiders are often not outsiders at all, but the created narrative is sufficient for this (imagined) difference between groups in order to appeal (2004, 560).

What can be achieved by using such a definition is that it will grasp over a larger sample. McKee and his fellow scholars exemplify with listing populists to the left such as Venezuela’s

⁸ Albertazzi and McDonnell stresses that they understand ideology as a system of beliefs, values, and ideas characteristic of a particular group, as the authors have adapted this view from Williams (1977, 55). “Used in this way, the term refers to belief systems whose function is to explain why things are as they are by providing an interpretative framework through which individuals and/or organizations make sense of their own experiences, relate to the external world and plan the future” (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2020, 11).

Nicolás Maduro as well as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro who is characterised to the right in addition to populists heavily influenced by nationalism or religion such as Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan or India's Narendra Modi. The list may continue with names such as USA's Donald Trump, Russia's Vladimir Putin and UK's Boris Johnson all adopting populist approaches (McKee et al. 2020, 2). What these political leaders have in common is that they have all adopted a (populist) approach where it is central to appeal to groups in society that have been left behind (Greer et al. 2017, 40). The form of neglect might be for various reasons including the consequences of loss of traditional industries and who have struggled to adapt to changing circumstances, often because of a lack of the necessary skills" (McKee et al. 2020, 2). As a room of opportunity opens populists exploit this search for someone to blame for the misfortune. Populist then may create a narrative where this misfortune is caused by the actions of a group - and this group who is being pointed out as the responsible for this misfortune are often identifiably different by for example by having a different skin colour (McKee et al. 2020, 2). Scholars Sandro Galea and Nason Maani exemplify by reminding us of how Donald Trump used COVID-19 as an excuse to justify the expansion of restrictions on workers coming from abroad (2020). We call this the "insider-outsider" narrative, and the populist leader enters this narrative as a strong leader who will save "his" people in addition to offering a better future which is, in turn, will matter little if they fail to achieve (McKee et al. 2020, 2). In this narrative, the populist leader is almost free of guilt – it does not matter if the promises fail and if they fail then it is always someone else's fault (often those from the "other" group or the elite). Translating this in a COVID-19 context, the narrative meets difficulties when the "other" group who is often to blame for a (for example) deteriorating labour market, is indeed COVID-19 being a microorganism that does not pay attention to national borders, passports, or citizenship. Nevertheless, this did not seem to stop President Trump from blaming what he referred to as a "Chinese" or "Kung Flu" virus in the same way as Hindu nationalist blamed Muslims (McKee et al. 2020, 2).

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MECHANISM (1):

NOT IDENTIFYING THE CAUSES OF THE SPREAD BY WRONGFULL BLAMING

As a consequence of blaming outsiders and victims, it becomes increasingly challenging to identify the actual causes of the pandemic and why it spreads. Instead of finding the cause, finding villains, enemies and blaming minorities or whoever is pointed out as the "responsible"

is more important. At the same time blaming outsiders and victims may also lead to an underestimation of the pandemic, and difficulty of seeing the real reasons why the virus is spreading. We cannot say for sure that these consequences can be expected, but theoretically, these may be theoretical consequences we might look for.

2.4.1.2 Mechanism (2): “Contempt for Institutions”

McKee et al. (2020, 2) identify two features of populism that are noticeable as they are inherent in populism and might have affected the steering wheel through COVID-19. The first feature is the contempt for elites and for traditional institutions that are populated by elites (McKee and Stuckler 2017, 669). Populist leaders tend to challenge and question institutional power and are reluctant to be bound by institutional constraints such as constitutions and courts (McKee et al. 2020, 2). This is well-founded in the classical literature on populism, as Mudde states how the discontent towards the elite as an expert group is a key feature to the ideational approach (2005, 243). Bugarcic argues that populists tend to persistently attack legal institutions in liberal democracies (2021, 191).

The second feature is populist's attitude towards public health institutions. Populist leaders tend to discredit, neglect, deny necessary funding and leave key positions unfilled within the public health institutions (McKee et al. 2020, 2). Some empirical examples: The Trump administration shut down the USAID funded PREDICT programme, designed to provide early warning of possible pandemic just three months before COVID-19 (Milman 2020). In a similar manner, Brazil experienced their President Bolsonaro firing two health ministers within weeks (Phillips, 2020a), and in 2017 India's Narendra Modi cut the planned budget for the National Health Mission – India's public health service by 20% (Kalra and Wilkes 2017). In The UK Boris Johnson removed the cabinet's Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingency Committee just days after he took office (Telegraph Reporters 2020). The health system in Turkey was severely weakened as Recep Tayyip Erdogan dismissed tens of thousands of civil servants including leading virologist (Erdemir and Lechner 2020).

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MECHANISM (2): WOBBLY PANDEMIC RESPONSE

As opposed to stable institutions a result of contempt for institutions are an unstable and unpredictable ad hoc attitude in policy responses. The politics may be wobbly and vary in an

unforeseen way. Also, time that could have been used to give a more efficient and sooner response to the pandemic may be wasted by arguing and fighting between the different institutions as they keep disagreeing. Theoretically, we may also find contradicting messages on COVID-19 going out to the public.

2.4.1.3 Mechanism (3): “Denialism”

Populists practice the art of denialism, as they reject evidence by being reluctant to be constrained by intuitions and their rules as well as rejecting the laws of science which are discovered and promoted by the elites (McKee et al. 2020, 2). Denialism includes populist promotion of conspiracy theories, cherry-picking evidence, citing false experts, moving goalposts, and employing a range of logical fallacy (Diethelm and McKee 2009, 2-3). Scholars of the ideational approach, Moffitt and Tormey (2014, 392) argue that populists will often deny the information experts present.

This kind of denialism is a central aspect of populism and is at the core of understanding populists' approach to COVID-19. Boris Johnson advised the public that "we should all basically just go about our normal daily lives" in addition to washing their hands frequently and avoid shaking hands with infected patients, the prime minister said in March 2020 (Russell 2020). Later in March Brazil's Bolsonaro described the pandemic (which by then had accounted for just under 20 000 deaths worldwide) as a "media trick" (Phillips 2020b). Furthermore, Donald Trump and Nicolás Maduro agreed as they both were promoting a treatment that did not have any evidential basis like when they were suggesting the use of Hydroxychloroquine (Graham-Harrison, Ellis-Petersen and Burke 2020).⁹ When Trump was challenged by the director of the US health department's Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority on the support for the use of hydroxychloroquine, he was fired (Smith 2020b). In a White House press briefing on April 10th, 2020, Trump noted about the virus: "You know, it's a brilliant enemy. They develop drugs like the antibiotics. You see it. Antibiotics used to solve

⁹. The World Health Organization have repeatedly said that hydroxychloroquine does not have clinical benefits in treating COVID-19. The hydroxychloroquine (or chloroquine as it is sometimes referred to) is “a treatment for malaria, lupus erythematosus, and rheumatoid arthritis, has been under study as a possible treatment for COVID-19 Current data shows that this drug does not reduce deaths among hospitalised COVID-19 patients, nor help people with moderate disease” (World Health Organization 2020c).

every problem. Now one of the biggest problems the world has is the germ has gotten so brilliant that the antibiotic can't keep up with it" (Brady 2020).

The quantitative multi-country study performed and presented by Kavakli (2020) in his "Did populist Leaders Respond to the COVID-19 Pandemic More Slowly? Evidence from a Global Sample" support McKee's denialism. Kavakli analysis show support for the perception that populist leaders have mismanaged the COVID-19 crisis, after analysing 94 countries political leaders' response to COVID-19 (Kavakli 2020, 13-14). The findings suggest that governments headed by populist leaders delivered a weaker response to COVID-19 than non-populist ones by implementing fewer closures and less robust health countermeasures during the onset of the crisis (Kavakli 2020, 13-14). Kavakli's study controlled for the effect of countries' economic capacity, demographic composition, earlier experience with pandemics such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), the level of democracy, and time elapsed since the discovery of a country's first confirmed COVID-19 case (Kavakli 2020, 8-9).

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MECHANISM (3): DELAYED PANDEMIC RESPONSE

When it comes to denialism, a possible consequence that we cannot say for sure that is expected, but theoretically may happen is how long it takes from the crisis occurred and till action is taken. Denialism may lead to a delay in response. Furthermore, denialism may cause a thug of war between institutions such as the ministry of health and the populist. Denialism can also result in less truthful and valuable information reaching the public.

2.4.1.4 Mechanism (4): "Suspicion of Elites"

The two central scholars on populism Mudde and Kaltwasser argue that populist politicians commonly describe the media (especially media that criticize their policies or messaging) as members of the "corrupt elite" (2017, 11-12). As "the elite" is a key concept in populism, populist politicians use morality as they distinguish between the *pure* people and the *corrupt* elite. The elite may refer to the economic elite, the cultural elite, and the media elite. These groups are seen as one whole group of corrupt members who not only have conflicting interests but also is actively working against the "general will" of the people (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 11-12).

This elite is defined by their power and that they are often holding leading positions within politics, the economy, the media, and the arts. Populist themselves are excluded from this "rule", as well as those who are sympathetic to the populist (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 12). For populists who are in power, can be useful to link the elite to economic power as it can "explain" their lack of political success – that "they are sabotaged by the elite, who might have lost political power but who continue to hold economic power" (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 13). As the central distinction in populism is moral, populists choose from a variety of secondary criteria to distinguish between the people and the elite. In this way, populists enjoy great flexibility in defining whom to blame (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 16).

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF MECHANISM (4): LOW MEASURE COMPLIANCE

When a society is characterised by a suspicion of elites this can influence to what extent the public will comply with any imposed or suggested measure related to COVID-19. If the public has a suspicious and untrusty attitude towards the media, then this can affect massively as media are crucial in spreading information about the pandemic and the measures. What information and knowledge people absorb coming from the media might be influenced. We cannot say for sure that these consequences can be expected, but theoretically, these may be theoretical consequences we might look for. As politicians are steering society through crisis, it will be possible to identify many individual decisions made by politicians that have influenced the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Timing of the decisions to impose restrictions on movement is likely to be the most important decisions (McKee et al. 2020, 2). "Other will include choices about how and when to implement testing and tracing strategies, how message was communicated, how necessary material to respond to the pandemic was produced" McKee et al. 2020, 2).

3.0 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Several methodological alternatives are available to study governments' policy responses to COVID-19. This thesis performs a qualitative case study on the Brazilian Federal Government/The President/The Supreme Federal Court policy response to COVID-19, using a report issued by the Universidade de São Paulo (2021) and 6325 publications from the Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo. To answer the posed research question: *How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?*”, and my sub-question: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?* I perform a case study of Brazil. In this chapter, I will explain the method of content analysis, case selection being the Brazilian President Bolsonaro: the extreme case, in addition to providing a brief comparative perspective on the case I have selected. Furthermore, this chapter will contain an account for the reliability and validity, weaknesses, and strengths of this study.

3.1 Case study

Choosing a research design should be based on what one seeks to achieve with the research (Gerring 2007a, 37). In addition to identify causal mechanisms leading to a certain outcome, I have four main aims for this study. Firstly, the aim is to describe COVID-19 in Brazil, a field that is under development and barely explored. Secondly, I seek to identify how Bolsonaro's populism has manifested itself during 2020. Third, I intend to analyse how Bolsonaro's populism during 2020 might have had implications on the course COVID-19 have taken in Brazil. Fourth and finally, the contribution aims at possibly make the foundation for further research generating new hypotheses.

Since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in Brazil on the 26th of February 2020, the outbreak grew fast in all Brazilian states (Porsse et al. 2020, 1106). Brazil made headlines as it came to be the second most affected country worldwide,¹⁰ regarding confirmed cases and

¹⁰ Data viewed on January 8th, 2021. On this point Brazil was the second most affected by deaths, only surpassed by The United States of America. By number of infected, Brazil was number 3 surpassed firstly by The United States of America and secondly by India (John Hopkins University of Medicine Coronavirus Resource Centre 2020).

deaths according to data on the COVID-19 Dashboard provided by the Centre for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) (John Hopkins University of Medicine Coronavirus Resource Centre 2021).

Yin (2014, 16) describe case studies as "An empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth within its real-world context". Case studies are a convenient and useful research design when used to gain knowledge in a field there is relatively little knowledge on (Swanborn 2010, 41). And a case study on populisms effect on COVID-19 policy response would indeed result in potential knowledge in a field there has been relatively little research on due to its recent nature. Also, case studies are suited to shed light on phenomenon's by using "how"- and "why"- research questions (Gerring 2007a 187-210). Given that my research question: *How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?* Is an investigative question that seeks to explain a "how", a case study will serve as a fitting choice of research design. A case study of a populist government's response to COVID-19 is a indebt study of a *how* mechanism, as opposed to a *to what degree* or *how much* which would be less suited for a case study research design.

Furthermore, when considering a qualitative or a quantitative approach there were several reasons for rejecting the quantitative alternative. A case study on qualitative data is used to gain a detailed understanding of the mechanisms at play in Bolsonaro's handling of the pandemic. The study uses qualitative analysis to gain insights into how Bolsonaro has acted, performed, and responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. The qualitative method is one of the more practical ways of looking into how Bolsonaro have handled the COVID-19 pandemic, as the data available are mainly qualitative. The research question also calls for a qualitative approach, as this study aims at answering a case question in depth. There surely would be advantages with adding a quantitative section or component to this study, but as for now, the aim is to answer a "how" question with a qualitative approach allowing to capture the complexities of the phenomenon.

3.2 Selecting the Case

Seawright and Gerring (2008, 296) define case study as "the intensive (qualitative or quantitative) analysis of a single unit or a small number of units (the cases) where the

researcher's goal is to understand a larger class of similar units (a population of cases)". Case studies have many positive aspects to them as a research design. One main aspect is how case studies are good at evaluating the scope conditions of theories by assessing whether or how variable matters for a certain outcome, while on the other hand they rarely contribute to estimating how much a variable matter (George and Bennett 2005, 25-26).

Literature on states response to COVID-19 frequently argues that Bolsonaro who is populist have mattered for the COVID-19 outcome in Brazil. Bieber (2020, 5) argue that populists Jair Bolsonaro have responded late and erratically to the crisis. Bolsonaro's coalition has been described as a "loose populist coalition incorporating military officers, far-right YouTube pundits, Pentecostal clergy, and weakly organize group citizens – some of whom like to camp near the presidential palace in Brasília" (Smith 2020a, 81). Smith furthermore describes Bolsonaro as a "right-wing, authoritarian populist who is vocally enthusiastic about military interventions in democratic politics" (2020, 77).

There are several good reasons why Brazil is a fitting case for a study of a populist's COVID-19 crisis management. Firstly, Brazil experienced a real tough challenge battling some of the world's highest numbers of dead and infected by COVID-19 in 2020 (John Hopkins University of Medicine Coronavirus Resource Centre 2021). Secondly, Brazil's policy response to COVID-19 has gained much attention as it made national and international headlines several times during the pandemic (Arias 2021; Gortázar 2020; Hecimovic, 2020; Londoño 2020; Londoño, Andreoni and Casado 2020; Phillips 2020c; Phillips 2020d; Phillips 2020e; Phillips and Barretto Briso 2020. While Brazilian state governors and several municipal mayors have had a policy response that included COVID-19 restrictions such as social isolation in mid-March 2020, the tone of the President was different (Duarte 2020, 287). Bolsonaro downplayed the seriousness of the pandemic by accusing the governors and mayors of hysteria saying they exaggerated the coronavirus threat (Duarte 2020, 287). Thirdly, scholars widely agree (across schools of thoughts and disciplines) that Brazil's President Bolsonaro is to be characterised as a populist (Daly 2019; Hunter and Power 2018; Neto and Pimenta 2020).

In addition to these listed arguments, the fact that in Brazil many prerequisite elements of choosing a scientific approach to the pandemic is present. Nevertheless, the country is led by a populist president. This argument makes Brazil a very interesting case to study COVID-19 and the effect a populist president may have on the pandemic handling. Bolsonaro being a clear

populist makes him an "extreme case" (Gerring 2007b, 101) which will be explained further in section 3.2.1.

Brazil is the most populated country in South America with over 210 million inhabitants, as of 2019 (Pasquali 2020). And in a Latin American context, Brazil may be described as a pioneering country in terms of its position in relation to its fellow Latin American neighbours. Love (2018, 863) argues that in comparison to the other Latin American countries, Brazil's "government has the highest per capita and absolute spending on research and development". Furthermore, Melo and Pereira (2013, 11) stated that Brazil's bureaucracy ranked first of twenty of the regions' nations according to the Inter-American Development Bank. In the years before 2016, Alston et al. (2016, 130) stated that Brazil had had the highest social spending per capital, along with the highest government expenditure as a share of GDP. The expenditure matched OECD levels. Brazil is in many respects in the vanguard in Latin America.

Returning to a central argument for choosing Brazil: Given how Brazil finds itself in the situation of possessing a large reporter of experts and expertise, one could argue that Brazil would indeed be least likely to have populism influence the pandemic handling. Brazil would be likely to follow a scientific approach when handling the COVID-19 pandemic. That Brazilian politicians would listen to advice from medical experts, health authorities and technocrats.

My main reason for choosing Bolsonaro is how well he fits the category of extreme case. Bolsonaro being an extreme case is a central feature to this study as him being an extreme populist allows us to isolate the effect of populism on COVID-19 handling, because Brazil's level of medical expertise and quality of institutions makes Brazil believed to perform similarly to a western country in handling COVID-19. In addition to that, I wish to give a less important but still interesting observation on the case. In accordance with George and Bennett's definition (2005, 121), I consider Brazil to be a least-likely case. We could have expected the country's president to be following advice from the relevant experts. In other words: several factors indicate that Brazil should be a least-likely case for a populist handling of the COVID-19 pandemic (George and Bennett 2015, 121). Brazil being least-likely adds an additional interesting layer to the case. Brazil is least likely to exhibit a given outcome: least likely to show that COVID-19 handling has been affected by populism: "In a least likely case, the independent variables posited by a theory are at values that only weakly predict an outcome or

posit an extreme outcome. Brazil, given its high levels of medical expertise, high levels of development relative to the region, and high quality of bureaucracy, would be likely to tackle COVID-19 with a scientific approach. Therefore, Brazil is a least-likely case to show that populism would impact the COVID-19 handling largely. While the fact that Bolsonaro is populist points to this study possibly revealing some smaller implications to the COVID-19 handling, the other variables regarding state of the Brazilian institutions and medical expertise indicate that we will see small signs of populism influencing COVID-19 handling. In fact, several factors indicate that the country would be likely to follow expertise, resulting in an expert-oriented/ professionally based approach to COVID-19. Brazil should be as similar to a western country in its pandemic response as possible. With Bolsonaro being an extreme populist, and an extreme case, we establish for sure that we have a populist in the picture, potentially influencing COVID-19 handling in Brazil.

Therefore, Brazil makes for a terrific case not only because the country is led by a populist president, but because studying the Brazilian case provides of an isolation of the effect of populism. If this study were to look at a different Latin American country such as Honduras or Nicaragua for example, those are economically challenged countries where the health care service is weak, the quality of the universities is low and there is a lack of medical expertise. A study of one such country would not enable us to separate and isolate the "effect of populism", as it would become challenging to see if their pandemic handling would be due to the populist running the country, or due to their lack of competence and state capacity.

3.2.1 An extreme case of populism

Gerring considers an extreme case method to be the method when one selects a case because of the extreme value on either the independent or the dependent variable. As my independent variable is populism, and my case for the independent variable is Bolsonaro, my case is thus what Gerring would consider an extreme case (2007b, 101). "Often an extreme case corresponds to a case that is considered to be prototypical or paradigmatic of some phenomena of interest. This is because concepts are often defined by their extremes, that is, their ideal types" (Gerring 2007b, 101). I have chosen an extreme case for populism (my independent variable) because *if* populism affects crisis management, then it is most likely that we will find that in Bolsonaro and Brazil. In addition to that, a small observation that I have accounted for

in the previous section is that I consider Brazil to be a least-likely case (George and Bennett 2005, 121). Brazil is least likely to display that populism has affected COVID-19 handling.

My research question being a “how” question, I do not aim at discovering if populism exists but how it exists, making an extreme case the best and obvious choice for this study. Certain methodological value is provided with his case study containing an extreme case. The methodological value is derived from the extremity of the case, as Bolsonaro’s populism is characterised as an observation far away from the mean of the distribution (Gerring 2007b 101), (Mendonça and Duarte Caetano 2021, 210).

Wanting a case that constitutes as much clarity as possible regarding the degree of populism, allows for me to look into *how* populism has affected crisis management, without ambiguity on whether or not, or to what extent the dependent variable is populist. I aim to discover what features of populism affects the independent variable; therefore, it became necessary to choose a case that was populist because if I had chosen a case who was not truly a populist, I would possibly not have made any finding of the mechanisms. Populism is an underlying prerequisite of the study. Bolsonaro showed all the important features one would look for when searching for a populist, and he is a case one could count on finding clear examples of how populism affects politics.

3.2.2 Populist Jair Bolsonaro

To proceed with this study, we need to establish whether Brazils President Jair Bolsonaro is to be characterised as a populist. Therefore, the following section will be dedicated to answering if Bolsonaro is a populist or not. When the far-right candidate Jairo Bolsonaro won the Brazilian presidential election on October 28th, 2018, he did so with 55% of the vote (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral, 2018). Given the political instability Brazil was facing as a consequence of the 2016 political crisis, Bolsonaro’s win helped renew the democratic legitimacy (Smith 2020a, 79).

There is consensus among scholars that Bolsonaro is a far-right populist (Neto and Pimenta 2020, 188). Personification was an important feature in Bolsonaro’s road to presidential power.

The international media have far and wide written about Brazil's president as "the populist", "the far-right populist", or the "right-wing populist" to mention some (Berg and Aragão 2021; Brum 2021; Harris and Pooler 2021; Leonhardt and Leatherby 2020; Phillips 2020f).

Despite different approaches to populism within the field of social sciences, Brazil's current President Jair Bolsonaro is unanimously described as populist across scholars adopting various conceptualizations of the populism term. In the "Populism as Parody: The Visual Self-Presentation of Jair Bolsonaro on Instagram" by Ricardo F. Mendonça and Renato Duarte Caetano (2021), Bolsonaro is described as populist making use of thin ideology also known as *the ideational approach*, in their study. The study by Eduardo Ryo Tamaki and Mario Fuks (2020) from 2020, also making use of the ideational approach to populism, finds Bolsonaro to be a populist via both a qualitative and a quantitative study. Similarly have the study by Serrano and Azucena (2019) on Brazil and Mexico's presidents (2019) as they analyse Bolsonaro as a populist in accordance with the Ideational approach.

Lasco and Curato (2019) introduced the concept of "medical populism" in relation to health emergencies. With this concept, Lasco and Curato were seeking to adjust their understanding of populism with Moffitt's notion who identify populism as a "style", which Lasco (2020, 1418) explains as follows: (i.e., "the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations"). In the 2020 study by Lasco and Curato stated that Bolsonaro: "...the president's response to the pandemic shows clear features of medical populism, particularly in the way he has simplified it, and made a spectacle of his own antagonistic, denialist response".

While Mudde (2007) on his hand views populism as "thin-centred ideology", Müller (2014) sees populism as a "political phenomenon", Laclau (2005) defines populism as a political logic and Moffitt (2016, 45) describes populism as "a political style that features an appeal to "the people" versus "the elite", bad manners and the performance of crisis breakdown or threat". Lasco and Curato (2019, 2) argue that this latter definition is broad enough not to be tied to definitions of populism that connect it to substantive worldviews (like how thin ideology demands adding for example nationalism). Furthermore, Lasco and Curato (2019, 2) argue that the definition is still specific enough (a frequent critique of thin-ideology) to characterise a political practice distinct from other responses. In *The Politics of Authenticity and Populist Discourses – Media and Education in Brazil, India and Ukraine* edited by Kohl et al. (2021),

Bolsonaro's populist approach is questioned through the eyes of the Essex school brought to us by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

Also, scholars making use of the Essex school approach to populism frequently refer to or find that Bolsonaro is a populist. In his "New reflections on Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism", Thomassen (2020, 734) characterises Bolsonaro as populist. In the book, *Populismo* (2019) Larraín provides a conceptual understanding of populism based on the Laclauian analysis – the Essex school. In his book, Larraín establishes Bolsonaro as a populist. The views and analysis of Larraín are addressed in the review by Rivera (2019).

In her "Measuring Populism Worldwide" Pippa Norris (2020) addresses how systematic cross-national evidence about populism have lagged behind, while she questions how populism can be measured in a consistent, valid, and reliable way. In the paper, Norris lists the populists: Donal Trump, Geert Wilders, Rodrigo Duterte, Narendra Modi, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orbán, Milos Zeman, Hugo Chavez, Bernie Sanders, Boris Johnson, Nigel Farage and finally: Jair Bolsonaro.

As we have seen, populism is highly contested and debated as a concept, different schools of thought have different ways of viewing and determining populism. Nevertheless, they all seem to agree that Bolsonaro is a populist (Bayerlein and Gyöngyösi 2020; Bieber 2020; Clark and Patterson 2020; Duarte 2020; Edelman 2020; Hunter and Power 2019; Kavakli 2020; McQueen, Farache and Grigore 2020; Neto 2020; Semple 2020; Smith 2020a). Therefore, I consider Bolsonaro to be populist and the case could be considered to be an extreme case according to Gerring's definition, who state that a case which holds an extreme value on either the independent or the dependent variable is to be characterised as an extreme case (2007b, 101).

3.3 Strengths and Weaknesses to this case study

In his *What is a case study and what is it good for?* from 2004, John Gerring lists strengths and weaknesses that should be considered when revising a case study as a research design. Gerring argues that if a field is dominated by case studies, another case study will be less needed. Just as in a field where cross-unit studies are prevailing, a case study given how it provides an in-depth study focusing on single units is much needed (Gerring 2004, 353). In populism studies of Latin America, qualitative studies have abounded (Hawkins and Kaltwasser 2017, 514).

However, the relatively recent presidency of Bolsonaro, as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic have yet to be studied in several case studies. The case(s) are simply too new.

Noticeable quantitative cross-unit work is Hawkins and Kaltwasser's historical dataset of elite-level populist discourse in Latin America, derived from textual analysis of Argentinian, Chilean and Peruvian presidential speeches from 1900 to 2000 (Hawkins and Kaltwasser 2017, 516). In addition to that dataset, there is also the Global Populism Database which measures the level of populist discourse in the speeches of 215 chief executives (presidents and prime ministers) from 66 countries across all continents mostly between 2000 and 2018 (Hawkins et al. 2019).

Performing this case study has made me face several limitations and restrictions that undoubtedly become necessary to mention when listing weaknesses to this study. Most of all I have been working under several limitations. Writing the thesis, I have mostly been allocated at home as opposed to working from the university library or designated study areas. Also, I was not able to travel to Brazil – to São Paulo or Rio and to work from there. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world community greatly in terms of travelling across borders and interacting with people, just to mention some consequences of the pandemic directly affecting my study. There have been periods where leaving my own house was advised against and writing a master's thesis alone in one's own private space have been solitary. Conversations and guidance from my supervisor have strictly been by phone or videocall, no physical presence allowed until the last weeks of working with the thesis.

Furthermore, I have not been able to consider collecting my own data by travelling to Brazil, any kind of fieldwork has been out of the question. In other words, this case study is a case study performed under a set of restrictions and limitations that would not normally apply, neither before nor after the pandemic.

Hawkins and Kaltwasser argue that Latin America has traditionally dominated populism studies, they, however, state that "Latin America still has something to offer to the comparative study of populism; the definitions developed in this region spring from an appreciation of actual movements and trends that are unusually strong" (2017, 514). My independent variable being populism put into a study with the case study as the research design is thus not ground-breaking on this field. But what is new, is the unique COVID-19 "twist" as I aim at looking into how populism affects policy response. A strength of this study is the accessible information relevant

to my study, deriving from a large focus on COVID-19. The international press, several scholars, and the public, in general, have all been occupied with one large subject during 2020 and the first half of 2021: COVID-19. I have benefitted from large amounts of solid sources on COVID-19, both academic and media related. Of course, the recent nature of the pandemic has limited the amount of research on COVID-19, nevertheless, noticeable and relevant contributions have already emerged which have been useful to me during this study. My knowledge of Latin America and Brazil, as well as being a Spanish-speaker and in the process of learning Portuguese have given me advantages in understanding and interpreting the case, profiting from this study.

Despite this being a case study, it will contain an aspect of implicit comparison. When looking into what Bolsonaro has said and done that seems reprehensible and stemmed from his populist approach, we to an extent note that it is different from how it could have been. Given how this case is an extreme case with aspects of least likely case, the ideal situation would be if Bolsonaro had shown a scientifically-based approach, thus I implicitly compare the outcome with that.

3.4 Data selection

When aiming at providing insight on both what has been the evidence and how the evidence can be understood, which will follow in the chapter on analysis, which data to look at becomes important. The following section is therefore dedicated to explaining what kind of data I have selected, and why. My research question is: *How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?* And the sub-question: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?*

I have chosen to document analyse data from Folha de São Paulo to answer my research question. A document analysis of a large daily newspaper will include daily updates and thus a large quantum of information on Bolsonaro during COVID-19. As I will do a qualitative document analysis, the Folha de São Paulo provides a functional search engine where everything published both online and in print is available, and I can easily access all data necessary for analysing 2020. The data from Folha de São Paulo will be used to analyse the

relationship between Bolsonaro and COVID-19, looking at his rhetoric and actions, and other relevant features that will shed light on how he has handled COVID-19.

3.4.1 Document analysis

The empirical information in this study is mainly collected from the Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo. That makes this a document analysis. "In recent years there has been an increase in the number of research reports and journal articles that mention document analysis as part of the methodology" (Bowen 2009, 27). Bowen furthermore defines document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents be if both printed and electronic (2009, 27). These documents that may be included in a document analysis may appear in a large variety of shapes and forms. The different types of documents might include organisational or institutional reports, various public records, press releases, program proposals, application forms, summaries, radio and television program scripts and content from newspapers (Bowen 2009 27-28).

3.4.2 Freedom of press and Folha De São Paulo

Reporters without borders yearly rates countries and how they performed on press freedom. In 2020, Norway got rated as the number 1 on its World Press Freedom Index (Reporters without borders 2020). Brazil came in 107th place, just over Kuwait and Mali, and just below Angola and Montenegro (Reporters without borders 2020).

"The coronavirus crisis exposed major problems in accessing information and gave rise to new attacks on the media by Bolsonaro, who blamed and scapegoated them for the crisis." (Reporters without borders 2021). In Brazil, journalism has been especially problematic since Bolsonaro became elected president in October 2018. Bolsonaro adopted a trademark of humiliating, insulting, denigrating, and stigmatising journalists (Reporters without borders 2021). There have been several threats and physical attacks making Brazil an especially violent country for the media where many journalists have been killed in connection with their work (Reporters without borders 2021). Folha is the biggest newspaper in Brazil. Folha has 285,000 print and digital sales and 204-million-page impressions last December (Phillips, 2018).

"Folha sets out the premise of its editorial line in order to search for critical journalism being nonpartisan and pluralist. These characteristics, which guide the work of the employees of the Folha groups, is detailed from year 1981 and onwards in different editorial projects" (Folha De São Paulo 2021, my translation).

By making use of the Folha search engine the search words "Bolsonaro coronavirus" filtered on everything published in Folha between 01.01.2020 till 31.12.2020 reveals 6325 hits. These hits include everything published in Folha in Portuguese: "Tudo Na Folha".¹¹ There has been made several searches on the same two words filtering the same timeframe at different times, to make sure that the identical number of hits is in fact constant. The search word "coronavirus" is made use of instead of for example "COVID-19", as "coronavirus" has more hits than "COVID-19" (the search "Bolsonaro COVID-19" in the same time frame presents 4120 hits). In the Folha search engine – "coronavirus" is more used and the editorial norm.

Similarly, I have chosen to search for "Bolsonaro" and not "Bolsonaro governo" ("governo" meaning government in Portuguese) or any other form including "governo". This is due to two reasons. First, I worked inductively by reading Folha publications gathering knowledge on the editorial norm in terms of which phrases were used for what. I then found that Bolsonaro was much more often mentioned than references to his government, in several publications, he would be mentioned concerning COVID-19, without necessarily mention of his government.

Second, populism is strongly linked to a strong leader (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2014). "Most authors noted a personalistic, plebiscitarian style of political leadership as a defining characteristic of populism. A charismatic individual wins and exercises power by maintaining direct, unmediated contact with a largely unorganized mass of followers (Weyland 2001, 5). The choice of linking the populism existing in Brazil to their president rather than to their government was therefore made.

Furthermore, to get an overview of what the coverage of COVID-19 and Bolsonaro has looked like in Folha De São Paulo, I analysed all the 6325 publications by monthly searches

¹¹ The categories Folha de São Paulo operates with in their search engine filter options, that they have categorized their content in include the following: "Editorias", "Edição Impressa", "Blogs", "Agora", "DataFolha", "Livraria Da Folha" and "Especiais". In English: "Editorials", "Printed Edition", "Blogs", "Now", "Folha Data", "Folha bookstore" and "Specials".

from the 1.st till the last day of each month, first noting how many publications in total (and monthly) contained the search words "Bolsonaro coronavirus". I then browsed through all the total articles for each month, month by month noting what were the main topics that frequented the publications, which I structured into certain categories. See table 4.4 in the chapter on analysis.

3.5 Measuring the four mechanisms of populism by content analysis

As I now have accounts for the use of Folha De São Paulo and how I have filtered and selected relevant articles – in total 6325 publications for all of 2020, these publications make way for my further analysis. This section is dedicated to the methodological approach to the four mechanisms of populism. There will firstly be a short introduction explaining the general approach, before a more in-depth account will be given of how I have analysed each mechanism separately. How articles have been coded and selected, and the choice to analyse the data qualitatively will be commented on. The 6325 publications from Folha de São Paulo all contain "Bolsonaro" and "coronavirus". The publications will be browsed and categorized into topics, looking into which topics are present at what month and for how long. The data will give insight into what Bolsonaro's approach to COVID-19 has been during 2020.

Content analysis is used as a method for analysing the data material. The content analysis has qualitative features to it. The qualitative content analysis uses documents as a source and systematization of content elements or selected text quotations to clarify which values appear in different texts (Grønmo 2004, 128). Values such as proximity and sensitivity are emphasized to a greater extent in qualitative content analysis by assessing to a lesser extent in advance already determined relevant data (Grønmo 2004, 130). This is especially useful, given how a qualitative content analysis provides opportunities for interpretation of which data is relevant and makes it possible to choose the information that is best suited concerning the specificity of the source and to shed light on the problem (Grønmo 2004, 131).

Given the explained choices of search words being "Bolsonaro coronavirus", this left me with a selection of 6325 publications. I have structured the findings into tables providing an overview of the number of articles published for each month and the main tendencies in terms of which

subjects were more frequently addressed, month by month in addition to a timeline. My approach with the analysis was to read all publications in January when I addressed January, February when I addressed February, and so on. I discovered which subjects dominating the coverage, and which subjects were less evident. During this analysis of the 6325 publications month by month, my approach was to note which publications I would save for the next analysis that would be dedicated to taking a closer look at each of the four mechanisms of populism. Some key publications were selected as they individually represented a topic that was a monthly tendency. As made account for in the previous chapter on a theoretical framework, McKee et al. argue that blaming outsiders and victims, contempt for institutions, denialism and suspicion of elites can appear as a link between populism and COVID-19. In the next chapter dedicated to the empirical analysis; these mechanisms will be used as a tool when looking into how they have affected policy in times of COVID-19 as well as how governments have responded to the crisis of COVID-19.

Mechanism (1): "Blaming Outsiders and Victims" is defined as a constructed "insider-outsider" narrative, where a populist leader claims to "save" his/her people, also establishing himself/herself as free of guilt (McKee et al. 2020, 2). Using the 6325 publications as a foundation, I by browsing these publications for the monthly tendency analysis, had selected, and saved publications containing blaming outsiders and victims. I looked for Bolsonaro expressing rhetoric where he placed wrongful blame for COVID-19. What I looked for when selecting and saving publications containing blaming outsiders and victims was Bolsonaro placing blame. As COVID-19 is a virus, the groups that Bolsonaro turned out to be blamed for the spread and deaths of COVID-19 did not have any scientific proof against them. In other words, I considered the blame Bolsonaro placed to be wrongful, thus defining these groups as "outsiders" or "victims". Browsing the 6325 publications was somewhat time-consuming but rewarding in terms of paving way for a qualitative categorization and thus necessary insight on the data. Some of the understanding of what constituted Bolsonaro's COVID-19 handling concerning blaming outsiders and victims was obtained as deductive knowledge while analysing the publications for monthly tendencies analysis of the overall Folha coverage.

Mechanism (2): "Contempt for Institutions" is defined by McKee et al. (2020, 2) as a mechanism containing features to populism. First is the contempt for elites and traditional institutions populated by elites. Second is populist's attitude towards public health institutions;

populists discredit, neglect, deny necessary funding and leave key positions unfilled within the public health institution. When coding the 6325 publications as containing contempt for institutions, I looked for several things. I considered contempt for institutions to include Bolsonaro's possible rhetoric, statements, and policy actions in relation to or towards other institutions such as the Ministry of Health or The Supreme Federal Court. The chapter on analysis, therefore, contains a dedicated table displaying which policy responses have been present on a national level, involving Bolsonaro and his government.

Now the analysis of the Folha publications had a deductive approach, browsing the 6325 publications searching for Bolsonaro acting or saying things showing him having contempt for institutions. As the ministry of health played an inevitably central role in the COVID-19 pandemic, this was reflected in the Folha coverage, and I found large amounts of data that I could cite and use when I considered contempt for institutions. I namely looked for the interaction between Bolsonaro and the institutions (to a large extent the Ministry of Health and the Supreme Federal Court). I looked at publications where Bolsonaro made comments on one or more institutions. I also looked at publications containing Bolsonaro shifting course or changing his opinion on policies, resulting in an ad hoc-ness which McKee et al. (2020, 2) include in a feature to contempt for institutions. Although some observations in the data could have been views as more than one mechanism, I, for the sake of structure and simplicity, treated all observations including the institutions (such as the Supreme Federal Court and The ministry of health) under the section analysing contempt for institutions.

Mechanism (3): "Denialism" is central to understanding how populists act facing COVID-19, McKee et al. (2020, 2) argue. When systematically coding Folha publications in search for denialism, I considered how the mechanism includes populists promoting conspiracy theories, cherry-picking evidence, citing false experts, moving goalposts, and employing a range of logical fallacies. These listed features were coded for while browsing the 6325 publications. I looked at Bolsonaro's rhetoric and actions, deductively discovering Bolsonaro's frequent encouraging to demonstrate and thus cause agglomerations and crowding. Bolsonaro's actions and the way he thus perceived himself abstaining from applicable COVID-19 regulations such as wearing a mask and keeping social distance, was also coded as denialism. During my coding, I saw how the data contained descriptions of actions implicitly denialism (actions), not just explicit (rhetoric). I also coded data containing Bolsonaro promoting actions that were opposite

to what the different institutions (such as state governments – for example Doria, the governor of São Paulo) had determined. If there was a lockdown in São Paulo and Bolsonaro pushed for the return to work and school, that fell under my categorization of denialism.

Mechanism (4): "Suspicion of Elites" put the media at the core of the phenomenon. When coding for this mechanism, I looked for how Bolsonaro would describe the media that criticised his political message, painting the media as a "corrupt elite". Furthermore, suspicion of elites also includes a populist's suspicion towards a financial elite or a cultural elite who are being placed in a narrative by the populist, where this elite is working against the general will/the best for the people. A somewhat us-them, above-down rhetoric. More than anything, coding for suspicion of elites focused on the media and how Bolsonaro talked about it, handled it, and treated the media. I also coded how Bolsonaro encouraged his supporters to harass and discredit the press as suspicion of elites. Furthermore, the 6325 publications contained elements of Bolsonaro painting a picture of "the people" set out against different groups, saying they had conflicting interests as suspicion of elites.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

The precision of the data is defined by its reliability, which is determined by who precise the measure in the study is. As Kellstedt and Whitten (2018, 114) argue: Valid research measures exactly what it has as a purpose to measure. My main data source is the Brazilian newspaper Folha De São Paulo (hereafter "Folha"), the largest and most serious newspaper in Brazil. Politically, Folha is understood as central and as an objective source of information.

I consider what to be reported in Folha to be truthful as it is fact-oriented. I consider my study to have validity as it measures what it has as purpose to measure; I am analysing Bolsonaro's actions and Folha is a reliable national newspaper. The content found in Folha is wide enough for my analysing and limiting the content for which I will analyse. A considered option was to analyze official political decrees and statements issued by the Federal Government, the President and the different ministries. However, this was dismissed due to assuming it would be time-consuming, unnecessary and unpragmatic. Considering that Folha contains the most important information from these official statements and decrees, I have chosen Folha for the sake of being pragmatic. The search words I have used when extracting data from Folha is

“Bolsonaro coronavirus) which are open and include a large sample of information relevant to my study, excluding as little relevant data as thought possible.

I could have included several different newspaper sources, but as I am interested in fact-oriented data Folha should be sufficient. In the case that my research called for an analysis of more subjective data, it would have been more reasonable to include several different newspapers providing a wider range of perspectives. However, this is not the case for this study. Folha as my main source is sufficient as it is considered valid for this study.

Furthermore, this study is reliable for 2020 which it aims to be, as my analysis covers the whole period. The study is not looking at a selected period of the year, but the year as a whole. In that way, I achieve a holistic perspective and can answer the research question validly and reliably. My research question is quite open and reaching wide. The structure of the study and selected data provides valid information to answer the question. There will always be hidden information Folha does not report on, but I analyze what can be observed and what can be observed has been reported in Folha.

4.0 EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS AND ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION

Based on the previous review of literature, theory and methods, this following chapter will aim to provide an answer to the research question: *“How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?”* and sub-question: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?*

4.1 Understanding Brazil during COVID-19

My independent variable is populism, and I have established that the Brazilian president is indeed a populist, we are now at the stage of looking into what this has meant for the handling and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter is therefore dedicated to analysing and describing the dependent variable and how populism through the four mechanisms of populism, looking into how these mechanisms have influenced the dependent variable.

The chapter is structured firstly in a short presentation of the COVID-19 situation in Brazil, the unfolding of the pandemic and the response to it. This presentation will solemnly be based on empirical evidence. Secondly, I will perform a step-by-step analytical review of the earlier presented four mechanisms of populism, reviewing the mechanisms in light of empirical evidence from the Brazilian case. The methodological approach has been accounted for in the previous chapter dedicated to this purpose, along with existing weaknesses and limitations to this study. There will be a discussion of the findings throughout the chapter as the analytical discussion is contingent. A summary of the chapter with main takeaways and a discussion of the findings is presented at the end.

4.2 The Brazilian COVID-19 response

In Brazil, the first case of COVID-19 was detected on 25 February 2020. By 31 May 2020, Brazil had experienced 29 thousand deaths from COVID-19 and the R-value was estimated at 3,1 "with a higher median but overlapping credible intervals compared with some other

seriously affected countries" (Buss et al. 2020, 856).¹² On 3rd of February 2020 Brazil declared COVID-19 a national public health emergency. As the largest city in South America, São Paulo receives a greater proportion of international flights than any other Brazilian city, and the first Brazilian case of COVID-19 came indeed from a traveller returning to São Paulo from Italy (Buss et al. 2020, 856).

4.2.1 The course of COVID-19 in Brazil

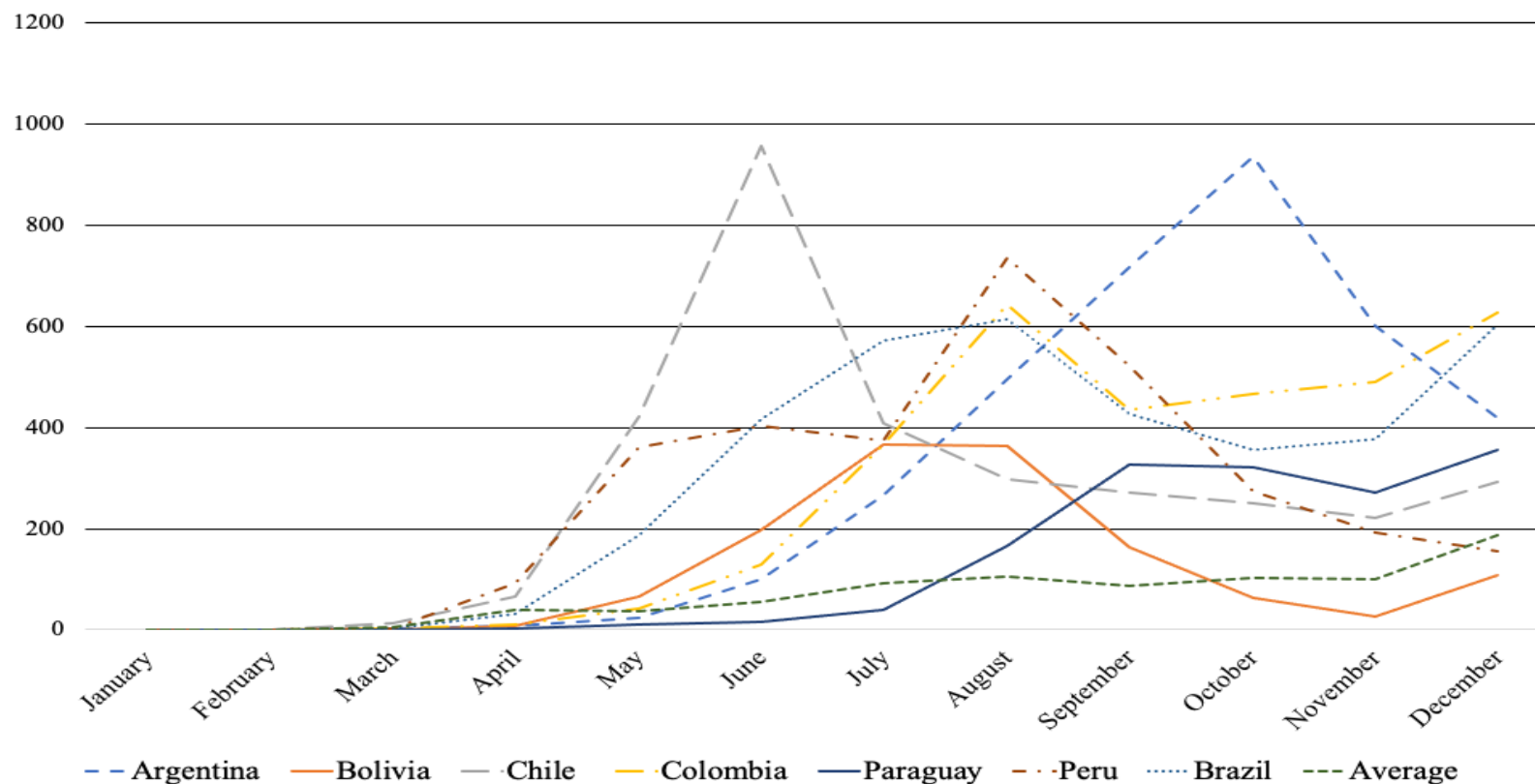
With its over 211 million people Brazil faced COVID-19 in the early days of 2020 (The World Bank 2021).¹³ When the WHO declared the disease a global pandemic on March 11th, 2020, they also recommended the implementation of nonpharmaceutical interventions aiming to slow the spread of infection and thus reduce the intensity of the epidemic. These measures were presented to prevent the health systems from becoming overwhelmed (Leone 2021, 11). Various nonpharmaceutical interventions were considered, however mathematical modelling of how the transition played out did indicate that social distancing practised by the population as a whole is the most effective way to combat the spread of the coronavirus (Leone 2021, 11).

As of 7th of April 2021, 10:44 am CEST Brazil has 13 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, starting the count on 3rd of January 2020. At the same time, the number of confirmed deaths is 332 thousand (World Health Organization 2020e). On May 13th, 2021, Brazil reached 200.2 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. The following figure 4.1. Displays how many new cases of COVID-19 a set of Latin American countries had month by month in 2020, per 100,000 inhabitants. As the figure below shows, Brazil is an outlier in terms of total cases of infected per month from August till November. Figure 4.1 displays a selection of Latin American countries to provide a context and comparison to Brazil. Originally, the countries Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Uruguay were included too but their similar values made the visibility difficult in the figure. Therefore, a full overview that includes these countries can be found in Appendix as attachment 2. In Figure 4.1, the mentioned countries are shown with average value.

¹² The R number is a way of rating coronavirus or any disease' ability to spread, R stands for the reproduction number (Gov.uk 2020). If the R value is 1 it means that on average, every person who is infected will infect 1 other person, the total number of infections is thus stable. Importantly: if R is greater than 1 the epidemic is growing, if R is less than 1 the epidemic is shrinking (Gov.uk 2020).

¹³ This is the number of inhabitants I refer to during this study when addressing the total population of Brazil.

Figure 4.1.: New cases of infected by COVID-19 per month (not acumulated) per 100,000 person.¹⁴



Data in figure collected from the WHO dataset: “Daily cases and deaths by date reported to WHO” (World Health Organization 2020f).

¹⁴ A complete graph including Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Ecuador which in Figure 4.1. Appear as an average, can be found attached in Appendix as attachment 2. Appendix attachment 1 displays the values in numeric table. These four countries have been excluded from Figure 4.1 in order to make the Figure more structured and tidier. These countries show similar values.

For the sake of adjusting the population to display values per 100,000-person, population data collected from The World Bank has been used.¹⁵

Figure 4.1 visualises how Brazil has fewer cases of infection except for July when Brazil has the most cases out of all the included countries. Interpreting these numbers, the spread of COVID-19 has not happened to a far larger extent in Brazil than in any other Latin American country. There is a visual peak in the spread in the early months of the pandemic, from April till July. As the spread seems to descend in July and "stabilize" on a level more similar to its fellow regional neighbours, the evidence of spread from the early days of the pandemic is clear. We also see how the spread again raises from November and onwards. Table 4.1 shows how further development lead Brazil to have the highest level of infection and the second-highest level of deaths per 7th of April 2021, per 100,000 persons.

Table 4.1: The accumulated amount of deaths and infections per 100,000, per country 7th April 2020. Data collected from the Our World in Data dataset (Our World in data 2021).

Country	Infected	Deaths
<i>Brazil</i>	6,040	160
<i>Chile</i>	5,248	124
<i>Argentina</i>	5,228	106
<i>Colombia</i>	4,751	127
<i>Peru</i>	4,736	450
<i>Uruguay</i>	3,114	35
<i>Paraguay</i>	3,032	64
<i>Bolivia</i>	2,341	106
<i>Ecuador</i>	1,872	96
<i>Mexico</i>	1,740	159
<i>Venezuela</i>	568	5

¹⁵ See attachment 5 in appendix for table displaying population per country.

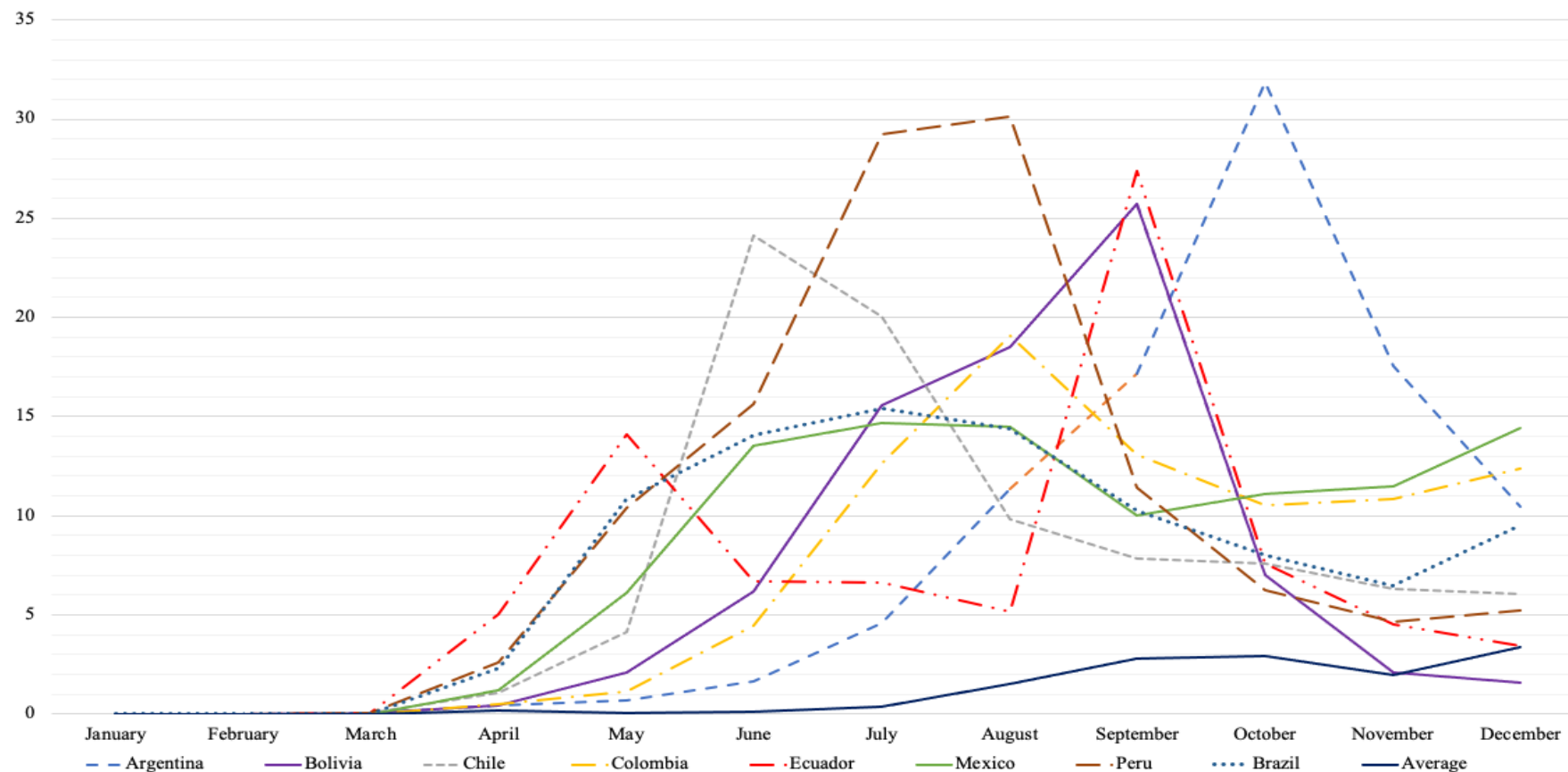
In light of the evidence from the numbers of dead and infected in Brazil and other Latin American countries throughout 2020, the situation for Brazil has not been favourable. The numbers have been high, much higher than what could be expected from a country in Brazil's position regarding institutional performance and capacity.

As seen in table 4.1, Brazil experienced higher numbers of infected than what would be an expectedly, given the comparison to the lower level of death and infected its neighbour countries show. These other Latin American countries included have undoubtedly weaker health and bureaucratic prerequisites than Brazil. The only country with more deaths per 100,000 than Brazil is Peru. Brazil has the most infected people by COVID-19. This is surprising in many ways. As made account for in section 3.3 "Selecting the case" in my chapter on methodology, Brazil is in many ways not like its Latin American neighbours and can thus not be expected to perform similarly. As stated in section 3.2: Brazil is the most populated country in Latin South America (Pasquali 2020). Love (2018, 863) argues that in comparison to the other Latin American countries, Brazil's "government has the highest per capita and absolute spending on research and development".

Furthermore, Melo and Pereira (2013, 11) stated that Brazil's bureaucracy ranked first of twenty of the regions' nations according to the Inter-American Development Bank. In the years before 2016, Brazil's expenditure matched OECD levels, with the highest social spending per capital, along with the highest government expenditure as a share of GDP (Alston et al. 2016, 130). Given our expectations to Brazil, we expected fewer dead and infected than how it turned out to be. One could view this as an enormous underperformance.

As we now have regarded the numbers of infected, I also wish to present overviews of the number of COVID-19 deaths. Figure 4.2. Show the number of COVID-19 deaths adjusted to the population by 100,000. The Brazilian numbers of COVID-19 deaths appear similar to those of Mexico, Colombia, or Ecuador (as seen in Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2.: New COVID-19 deaths by country and month, per 100,000. Not accumulated.¹⁶



Data in figure collected from the WHO dataset: “Daily cases and deaths by date reported to WHO” (World Health Organization 2020f).

¹⁶The value “Average (excluded countries) is an average for the values of the countries Venezuela, Uruguay and Paraguay as they had similar values. A figure including these countries can be found in Appendix, under attachment 3. Numeric values for the figure 4.2 can be found in Appendix as attachment 4.

The question then becomes: "Why, has populism got something to do with this?". Why has Brazil despite its institutional and financial capacity, ranking higher than its neighbouring countries on the continent on measures such as spending on research and development, bureaucracy with the highest quality and social spending per capita yet still NOT showing lower numbers of infected or dead by COVID-19? Brazil's expenditure on health, research, and social spending match OECD levels. Nevertheless, Brazils COVID-19 deaths and infections show numbers similar/worse than its Latin American neighbours. This is in many ways surprising. The expectation was that Brazil would show signs of a more contained infection of COVID-19. One could expect Brazil to be a country given its levels of expertise and development, that should be able to respond well to the COVID-19 pandemic, but it has not.

4.2.2. COVID-19 measures issued by the Brazilian Federal Government

Having accounted for the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil through numbers of infected and deaths, the notion that Brazil has not performed "well" is further supported. The question one might ask oneself, is "why?". The following section will therefore be dedicated to an account of which measures the Brazilian Federal Government has set in motion in dealing with COVID-19. I present a timeline before discussing some tendencies and noticeable features.

Table 4.2: Timeline of Brazilian Federal Government response to COVID-19. Source for the table: Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 29-116.

February	Measure
<i>03/02</i>	The Ministry of Health declares Emergency of national importance in public health and establish a Health Emergency Operations Centre as a coordinated response management.
<i>06/02</i>	The president sanctions law 13,979 – the coronavirus law providing measures for coping with the pandemic. ¹⁷
<i>13.02</i>	Ministry of Health present National contingency plan for COVID-19 infection. ¹⁸
March	

¹⁷ The measures are: “isolation, quarantine; determination of compulsory medical examinations, laboratory tests, collection of clinical samples, vaccination and other prophylactic measures or treatments specific doctors; epidemiological study or investigation; exhumation, necropsy, cremation, and handling of corpses; exceptional and temporary restriction entry and exit from the country” (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 29 my translation).

¹⁸ The plan included: “surveillance, laboratory support, infection control measures, care pharmaceutical, health surveillance, health measures at entry points (ports, airports, and border crossings), risk communication and management (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 30 my translation).

11/03	Ministry of Health regulates law 13,979 changing quarantine measures. ¹⁹
16/03	The Minister of Health presents national contingency plan for the infection of COVID-19 in indigenous communities, without any concrete measures or defined responsibilities. The Supreme Federal Court presented an injunction determining the adoption of coping measures for indigenous communities facing COVID-19. The measures were repeatedly breached, resulting in the Supreme Federal Court adopting succession of measures later on in 2020.
17/03	The ministry of Health and the ministry of Justice established which criminal sanctions non-compliance with law 13,979 would result in. (This was later revoked in May when both ministers were replaced).
17/03	Venezuelans (as the only nationality) is restricted entry to Brazil by road or land.
20/03	Bolsonaro amends law 13,979 to give himself the right to dispose of public services and essential activities through a decree, attempting to redistribute health policy power in his favour. (on 24 th of March the Supreme Federal Court grants an injunction assigning states and municipalities the competence to dispose, by decree on public services and essential activities).
23/03	The Federal government sought to take over some pulmonary ventilators purchased by the city of Recife. The Federal Government argued that they had the right to do so according to law 13,979. This became a huge legal dispute on federal autonomy, ending in a court ordering the Federal Government to refrain from requesting the ventilators.
24/03	The Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (Anvisa) released government distribution of chloroquine-based medicines without needing special prescription.
25/03	The Federal Government introduced decree 10,292 defining all religious activities as essential during the pandemic.
26/03	The Federal Government launches the “Brazil cannot stop” campaign encouraging people to go back to work. The Supreme Federal Court banned the campaign.
April	
02/04	The Federal Government introduces financial emergency aid for unemployed workers in the informal sector, due to COVID-19.
08/04	The Supreme Federal Court grants injunction ensuring states and municipalities to exercise legal restrictions during the pandemic.
16/04	Bolsonaro dismisses Minister of Health Luiz Henrique Mandetta because of Mandetta refusing to promote the use of chloroquine.
22/04	The Supreme Federal court disclosed on 22/05 the content from a ministerial meeting that took place the 22/04. At the meeting Bolsonaro told ministers to avoid spreading fear in the public, downplaying the seriousness of the pandemic.
22/04	The foreign minister published an article on his blog titled “The coronavirus has arrived”, attacks the WHO comparing their recommendations to communism.
28/04	The Federal Government modifies a decree by adding several activities in the; chemical, petrochemical, and plastic sector to the list of essential activities that cannot be interrupted by the pandemic.
May	
04/05	The Supreme Federal Court established, in response to a request from the state Mato Grosso, that respirators purchased by states are public assets and cannot be subject to administrative request, except for in the duration of state of defence or siege.

¹⁹ The changes on quarantine regulations determined that the quarantine: "will be determined by administrative act formal and duly motivated and must be edited by the Secretary of Health of the State, Municipality, Federal District or Minister of State for Health or higher at each management level, published in the DOU and widely disseminated by the media" (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 31, my translation).

07/05	Bolsonaro amended decree 10,342 to include civil construction as an essential activity during the pandemic.
07/05	Bolsonaro, some ministers and businessmen surprise visited the (at the time) President of the Supreme Court, Dias Toffoli. The visit was described as a way of pressuring Toffoli into complying with Bolsonaro anti-quarantine measures
11/05	Bolsonaro amends decree 10,344 to include beauty salons and barber shops, sports academies among key activities during the pandemic.
13/05	Bolsonaro issued a provisional measure (MP 966) saying public agents only could be punished in the civil and administrative sphere for acts committed in confronting the coronavirus pandemic. The Supreme Federal Court limited the provisional measure and decided that public agents can be punished for acts that go against science.
14/05	Bolsonaro vetoes a law and constructs it from expanding the reach of financial emergency aid. ²⁰
20/05	Ministry of Health published information guidelines promoting the use of chloroquine as treatment for patients with mild COVID-19 symptoms.
27/05	The minister of Justice (André Luiz de Almeida Mendonça) and the Minister of Health (Eduardo Pazuello) revokes the ordinance maid by their predecessors on 17 th of March. The ordinance revoked provided mandatory measures for COVID-19 such as isolation and quarantine.
June	
03/06	The Ministry of Health releases COVID-19 data late that day: after 10pm. The ministry says the delay was not intentional.
05/06	The ministry of Health's website on COVID-19 data is down before returning the next day, then only showing data from the last 24 hours. The Supreme Federal court (on the same day) granted injunction and determined that the data should be fully restored, by the Ministry of Health, as it appeared before it disappeared on the 04/06.
24/06	The Federal court of accounts alerted the Civil house of the Presidency of the Republic about the lack of a strategic guideline and a coordinated communication plan for confronting COVID-19. ²¹
July	
02/07	Bolsonaro vetoed provisions of law 14,019 which would establish the mandatory use of masks. ²² Bolsonaro also vetoed granting federal entities the possibility to issue fines when failure to comply with the obligation to use masks. The national Congress overturned the veto, keeping the provisions.
06/07	Bolsonaro again vetoes the mask law, despite the expiration of the period of fifteen days for exercising the veto right. On 30/08 The Supreme Federal Court reinstates the validity of the vetoed provision, stating that Bolsonaro vetoing the law is unconstitutional.
07/07	Bolsonaro vetoes several provisions of law 14,021 which determines protective measures such as urgent access to drinking water, hygiene and cleaning material, hospital beds, ventilators, and oxygen etc.) for indigenous communities.
11/07	The Supreme Federal Court defines the Federal Government's response to the pandemic as genocide.
30/07	The Minister of Health expands the guidance of prescription of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine for pregnant patients against COVID-19

²⁰ The law 14,998 would include artisanal fishermen, taxi drivers, app drivers, school transport drivers, application, self-employed physical education professionals, street vendors, marketers, waiters, nannies, manicures, hairdressers and hired teachers who are without a salary (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 53).

²¹ Tribunal de Contas da União (TCU).

²² The law was defined to be used in commercial and industrial establishments, religious temples, schools, and other closed places where there is a meeting of people.

August	
03/08	Bolsonaro vetoes the entire bill 1,826 which provided financial compensation to health workers incapacitated by COVID-19. The veto was rejected by the national Congress in March 2021.
15/08	The Federal Government ignores a proposal from Pfizer offering Brazil to buy the vaccines delivered in December 2020.
23/08	Special advisor to the Bolsonaro, Arthur Weinstraub states that masks don't protect and that the measures will ruin the economy.
24/08	The Federal Government publishes a post saying how the crisis should not be used as a political instrument, that it could have been possible to save more lives.
24/08	The Federal Government organizes the event "Brazil winning over COVID-19" and the President states: "If it [chloroquine] had not been politicized, a lot of more lives could have been saved...." (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 84, my translation).
25/08	The Ministry of Health reject a donation of 20 thousand RT-PCR test kits for COVID-19 from LG international.
September	
October	
19/10	The Ministry of Science and Technology announced that nitazoxanide (used against worms) managed to reduce viral load for COVID-19. ^{23,24} The ministry said they could not present evidence because an article of the study had been forwarded to an international scientific journal which required originality.
20/10	Bolsonaro refused the Minister of Health to purchase of 46 million doses of Coronavac, saying that the Brazilian people would not be guinea pigs.
November	
22/11	The Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo reported that the ministry of health had 6,86 million unused COVID-19 tests that would expire between December 2020 and January 20201.
December	
01/12	Ministry of Education determined that higher education that is part of the federal system be returned to physical presence 1 st of April 2021. It was later amended to 1 st of March 2021.
08/12	The Federal Court of Accounts concluded that funds meant for the public information campaigns on COVID-19 had been used wrongfully.
08/12	Eleven former ministers of health from different parties published an article denouncing "the disastrous and inefficient conduct of the Ministry of Health in regarding the Brazilian population vaccination strategy against COVID-19" (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 107, my translation).
14/12	According to the Ministry of Health there were a 32% drop in hospital beds dedicated to COVID-19 patients, in December compared to in July. 3297 units had been closed.
16/12	The Ministry of Health presented the "National Plan for operationalization of vaccination".
17/12	Bolsonaro edited a provisional measure to comply with a determination from the Supreme Federal Court. The provision secured extraordinary credit for the Ministry of Health to buy vaccines and thus implement their vaccine plan; The national plan for operationalization of vaccination.
18/12	The Supreme Federal Court did not approve the third version of the "general plan to combat COVID-19 for indigenous peoples", by the government. The Supreme Federal Court justified the decision saying that the government's plan put the lives and health of the indigenous people at risk, and that the plan for generic.

²³ Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia e Inovações (MCTI).

²⁴ The higher viral load the more sever active viral infection. In relation to COVID-19 higher viral load means increased disease severity and mortality (Fajnzyblber et al. 2020, 1).

18/12	The Supreme Federal Court extended (indefinitely) the authorization to state and municipal authorities to adopt measures such as isolation and quarantine, import medical supplies.
30/12	The Health Ministry had given thousands of masks and protective equipment considered inappropriate for use by health personnel, to federal districts.
31/12	According to the National Health Council, around 33 billion reais that could have been earmarked for measures that could have contributed effectively to social distancing and job maintenance of the population's income, were not used until the end of the year 2020. ²⁵

I will now show how Brazil has performed during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of policy responses and approaches, steaming from the Federal Government. By presenting this timeline I wish to draw attention to all evidence pointing to how the Federal Government, ministers and Bolsonaro have delayed and hindered COVID-19 measures from being implemented, already from February when Bolsonaro vetoed a coronavirus law that could provide containment measures. As governments around the world have chosen different attitudes and approaches, global health institutions such as the WHO have constantly presented guidelines and recommendations governments have chosen to follow to a varying degree. The Brazilian Federal Government have not been unified in its pandemic response. The Ministry of Health has been unpredictable in its opinion on the chloroquine-based treatment of COVID-19. As early as March, The Health Regulatory Agency (Anvisa) provided distribution of chloroquine-based medicines without needing a special prescription. Furthermore, the Federal Government/President Bolsonaro has on several occasions vetoed or amended laws related to COVID-19 originating from other institutions. The President and his government have also, on multiple occasions sought to actively work against the COVID-19 restrictive measures issued in states by governors. Bolsonaro did this by trying to "ease up" what constituted essential activities.

An overall characteristic that has marked their response during 2020 is how the Federal Government can seem to have prioritized the economy over containment measures, by frequently creating measures to stimulate and keep the economy going. On one occasion in August Bolsonaro's special adviser stated that masks didn't work and that they would ruin the economy. Another interesting factor is how the Supreme Federal Court and the Federal Government does not seem to agree. The Supreme Federal Court defined the Federal

²⁵ Around 6 billion USD.

Government's response to the pandemic as genocide in July. Later on, in September, the Supreme Federal Court refused to approve the protective plan for indigenous communities issued by the Federal Government, based on it being too vague and without defined tasks and responsibilities.

Furthermore, table 4.2 shows how the Federal Government ignored an offer from Pfizer to buy COVID-19 vaccines.²⁶ In addition to that, the Federal Government rejected an offer of donation COVID-19 test kits from LG International and how they had large amounts of unused COVID-19 tests that would shortly expire. Also, it became evident that the Federal Government had handed out unfit protection equipment to federal districts. Table 4.2 shows how the Federal Government and Bolsonaro have constantly worked against the Supreme Federal Court, vetoed, and amended laws to become smaller and less impactful meant, which were originally meant as tools in the fight against COVID-19. In addition to that, the table 4.2 displays how the Federal Government have neglected their task of efficiently maintaining the Brazilian public's interest: keeping people healthy and alive.

4.3 Populism during COVID-19 in Brazil

As the previous section provided an overview of the evidence in terms of takeaways from Brazil's experience with COVID-19, we now have a better picture of how the pandemic has affected Brazil. To provide some possible clarity as to how Brazil has performed and responded to the pandemic as it has, we proceed with our analysis. Keeping in mind the research question *“How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?”* and sub-question: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?*

I now focus on the four mechanisms of populism presented and accounted for in the chapter on a theoretical framework. Thus, the following section will analyse Bolsonaro, and the extended form, shape and size of his COVID-19 response being characterised by blaming outsiders and victims, contempt for institutions, denialism, and suspicion of elites. Bolsonaro. Firstly, I present an analysis of a year of COVID-19 and Bolsonaro coverage in Folha De São Paulo

²⁶ The Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is developed by the German company BioNTech in collaboration with American Pfizer (Pfizer 2020).

focusing on accounting for what has been the main tendencies over time in the coverage. Secondly, that will be followed by a step-by-step review of the four mechanisms, one at a time, aiming at identifying expected observable implications qualitatively in a then already selected number of articles from Folha that had been sought out during the analysis of the tendencies monthly, throughout the year.

4.3.1 A year of COVID-19 in Folha De São Paulo

As made account for in the previous chapter on methodology, the Brazilian newspaper Folha De São Paulo (hereafter Folha) is my main data source. To get an overview and impression of what the COVID-19 linked to Bolsonaro coverage has looked like, I performed an analysis of all articles with a wide and including search words.

Table 4.3.: Folha de São Paulo publications “Bolsonaro coronavirus”.

Month	Number of publications
January 2020	32
February 2020	125
March 2020	1242
April 2020	1226
May 2020	932
June 2020	625
July 2020	514
August 2020	359
September 2020	310
October 2020	361
November 2020	285
December 2020	309

The Folha search engine reveals a total of 6325 hits in their database when searching for "Bolsonaro coronavirus" on everything published from 01.01.2020 till 31.12.2020 (see in debt explanation of search in Chapter on methodology). Table 4.3 reveals that there is a clear overweight of articles written containing "Bolsonaro coronavirus" in the early months of the pandemic, starting in March reaching 1242 articles.

The following months display a continuous large number of publications throughout April and May, as it steadily decreases in numbers and flattens around 300-350 publications a month through August till December 2020. This is more or less the same tendency in several publications in Folha as it is in numbers of dead and infected by COVID-19 in Brazil, as presented in figures 4.1 and 4.2. By systematically working the way through all 6325 headlines, a certain impression is made. An overview of the content is presented in table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Analysis of Folha De São Paulo “Bolsonaro coronavirus” publications.²⁷

Month	Main tendencies in Folha De São Paulo publications
<i>January 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The coverage is mainly focused on China and Brazilians in Wuhan. • the virus spreading within China.
<i>February 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subject of the Brazilians in China, their return and quarantine rules. • The different financial aspects such as how the virus will affect/do affect currencies and cause recession.
<i>March 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the virus is affecting the world economy and currencies, weak USD, and Brazilian investment sinking. • Fall in oil prices and in the Brazilian stock market. • Bolsonaro and Governors/Congress arguing on coronavirus handling. • Bolsonaro underestimating the virus. • Bolsonaro meeting Pro-Government protesters without a mask, while shaking hands with supporters which raises criticism from Congress.
<i>April 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The discussion on emergency aid for people affected by COVID-19. • Chloroquine as medicine, and the distribution and debate about effects. • Henrique Mandetta (the minister of health) and his approach to the virus. • Mandetta gets fired due to disagreeing with Bolsonaro on virus handling. • Brazil breaking the death record. • Bolsonaro wanting to re-open schools and industries
<i>May 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The labour law, Bolsonaro causing agglomeration. • A debate on the use of hydroxychloroquine to treat Covid-19 • Bolsonaro in conflict with the Supreme Federal Court. • Brazil’s Covid-19 death record. • Unemployment rising • Emergency aid. • The possible resignation or impeachment of President Bolsonaro. • Social media removing content due to classifying fake news posts about coronavirus shared by Bolsonaro. • Bolsonaro appoint a new Minister of Health who resign after almost a month.

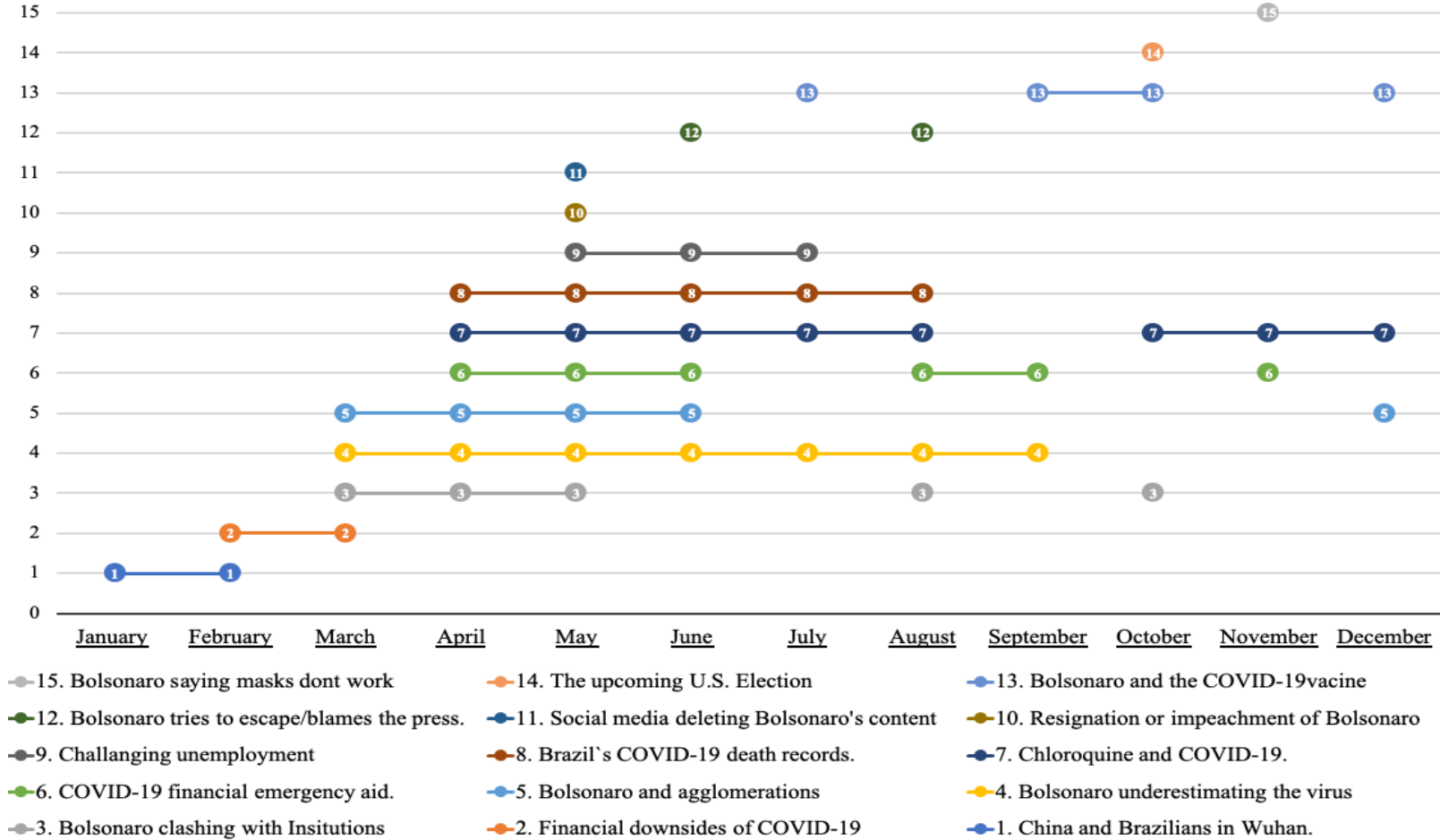
²⁷ See attachment 6 in appendix for references on monthly tendencies. Selected sources are cited.

<i>June 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency aid • Bolsonaro avoiding the press. • Records in deaths and infected. • The controversy with the use of Hydroxychloroquine. • Protests, both pro and against Bolsonaro. • Unemployment. • Bolsonaro encouraging people to enter hospitals and film free beds in order to show that the capacity.
<i>July 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The debate about the use of Hydroxychloroquine which Bolsonaro promote. • The contamination of ministers. New records in deaths and infected. • A possible vaccine (mostly the Chinese one). • The absence of care and protection for the indigenous communities once faced with the virus. • Bolsonaro and his wife catches the virus. • The rising unemployment.
<i>August 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The disagreement on protecting indigenous communities against covid-19. • Brazil reaching 100,000 covid-19 Deaths. • Hydroxychloroquine. • Bolsonaro criticising the media. • Bolsonaro and the Congress/The Supreme Federal Court argue. • Emergency aid.
<i>September 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing emergency aid. • Bolsonaro being ambiguous about whether vaccine be mandatory or not. • Bolsonaro downplaying the pandemic in Brazil.
<i>October 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The upcoming U.S. election. • The use of Hydroxychloroquine. • Using the Chinese vaccine and Bolsonaro saying it won't be mandatory. • The indigenous community.
<i>November 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolsonaro say masks don't work. • Emergency aid and spending of pandemic funds. • Bolsonaro defend the use of Hydroxychloroquine.
<i>December 2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bolsonaro defend the use of Hydroxychloroquine. • Bolsonaro causing agglomeration. • The start of the vaccination. • Bolsonaro and Doria (the governor of São Paulo clashes over vaccine)

Table 4.4. Lists the main tendencies in the Folha coverage on "Bolsonaro coronavirus" there is a lot of information to be interpreted. To get a better idea of how these different topics have manifested themselves over time. For the sake of simplicity in the timeline, I have structured and coded all topics into 15 categories.²⁸ The 15 categories will be explained and accounted for on the next page following figure 4.3.

²⁸ See Appendix Attachment 7., and 8. For an overview of which of the topical bullet points from table 4.4 have been coded as which of the 15 categories in figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3: Timeline of trending topic.²⁹ Based on data from table 4.4.



²⁹ An explanation of table 4.4 and which category each topic marked by bullet point has been coded as, can be found in Appendix as attachment 8.

The very first publications in Folha on Bolsonaro and COVID-19 focused on China, the origin of the virus and Brazilians in China contracting the virus and their return to Brazil. That was true for January and February. Once the virus really spread and thus started to have an impact, Folha published 1242 pieces in March mainly addressing what the virus meant for the national and international economy (Marked as "2. Financial downside" in Figure 4.3). This was perhaps part of the "shock" reaction at first. Folha would also publish content on how the President and Congress/Governors were disagreeing from the very start in March on how to tackle the virus (Marked as "3. Bolsonaro clashing with institutions" in Figure 4.3).

Another prevailing tendency becoming evident in the Folha coverage is the power struggles and constant battles between the President and the Congress/the Supreme Federal court. These topics are also coded as "3. Bolsonaro clashing with institutions" in Figure 4.3. From as early as March, Folha wrote a lot about how Bolsonaro on one side with Congress and Governors on the other side had two completely different ideas on how to tackle the virus that had just started to spread. When Bolsonaro fired the minister of health (Mandetta) in April, he got replaced by Nelson Teich who resigned shortly after a month due to pressure from Bolsonaro. By the end of the year, in December 2020, Bolsonaro and the Governor of São Paulo whose name is Doria clashed over the subject of the vaccine.

Bolsonaro was from March and onwards reportedly shaking hands with supporters and disobeying rules of maintaining a social distance and abstained from/strictly limited physical contact with other people. As Figure 4.3 shows, marked as "5. Bolsonaro and agglomerations" this tendency proved lasting from March and throughout June, before re-emerging again in December. Bolsonaro would reportedly cause agglomerations, deny the seriousness of the pandemic, say masks don't work, in addition to encouraging people to enter hospitals to film what he meant was a big capacity with lots of free emergency beds. In other words, and as shown in Figure 4.3: Bolsonaro underestimated the virus from March till October, after which the denialist rhetoric and actions silenced somewhat.

In addition to noting that Bolsonaro has been reportedly downplaying the seriousness of the virus according to Folha, I wish to draw attention to the long and big debate on the use of Chloroquine or Hydroxychloroquine as it is sometimes referred to. As made account for in the chapter on theory, The World Health Organization have repeatedly said that

hydroxychloroquine does not have clinical benefits in treating COVID-19. Hydroxychloroquine is "a treatment for malaria, lupus erythematosus, and rheumatoid arthritis, and has been studied as a possible treatment for COVID-19. Current data shows that this drug does not reduce deaths among hospitalised COVID-19 patients, nor help people with moderate disease" (World Health Organization 2020c).

Nevertheless, table 4.4 and figure 4.3 show how Folha has published content where Bolsonaro has argued for the use of hydroxychloroquine since April, with this being a tendency every single month throughout 2020 with only the exception of September. The decline in Bolsonaro defending and preaching about hydroxychloroquine share a similar trend as the decline in September on new cases of infected by COVID-19 per month (not accumulated) per 100,000 people. This is visualised in figure 4.1. The use of hydroxychloroquine was first written about in April, and regardless of Folha publishing reports on how the remedy did not show an effect on COVID-19, Bolsonaro continued to promote and praise the alleged effect of hydroxychloroquine. Comparing this very topic to a different populist in power under the pandemic, Bolsonaro proves very persistent. The U.S President at the time, Donald Trump, embraced hydroxychloroquine just like Bolsonaro did, in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic (Bump 2020). Yet unlike Bolsonaro who kept defending and pushing for use of hydroxychloroquine, Trump's obsession with the remedy rose and fell in 40 days, when he did not get any support and was contradicted repeatedly by medical expertise (Bump 2020). This did however not stop Bolsonaro, who kept going on about wanting to use hydroxychloroquine, despite growing resistance in evidence against it.

The Folha coverage was also characterized by topics such as the rising unemployment, the COVID-19 financial emergency aid and financial downsides of COVID-19. Financial downsides to COVID-19 were reported in the beginning. Rising unemployment was reported on for some time during May till July, before disappearing. While financial emergency aid caught attention from April till June, disappearing and re-emerging in August-September and again in November. Thus, the financial topic was present all year but changed character by appearing with different subtopics. The situation involving the COVID-19 vaccine caught many Folha headlines. Bolsonaro changed his tone about the vaccine several times and denied at first that Brazil would ever buy it. Nevertheless, Folha could after reporting on it since August, announce that the vaccination had started in December.

Table 4.4 and figure 4.3 provide insight among other things showing how Bolsonaro from the very beginning of the pandemic and throughout 2020 opposed in various ways the Congress, Governors and the Supreme Federal courts attempt to impose functioning restrictions limiting the spread and thus consequences of the virus. Several topics emerge in March/April holding high intensity in the first half of the year before disappearing.

Bolsonaro casing agglomerations where he touched people emerged in Folha's coverage in March, before disappearing from the publications before re-emerging in December. The topics regarding hydroxychloroquine (coded as 7) and Bolsonaro chasing with institutions (coded as 3) shared the tendency: emerging at the beginning of the pandemic, appearing until June-July, before disappearing and re-emerging in the second half of the year. This tendency coincides with the new cases of infection and deaths by COVID-19 in Brazil, as shown in Figures 4.1 and 4.2. The figures display a rise/high in infected and deaths from March throughout July, before descending somewhat before numbers of infected starting to rise again in early fall 2020 and continuing to rise for the rest of the year (see figure 4.1 and 4.2).

4.3.2 Bolsonaro's populism during COVID-19

The pandemic struck Brazil just as the current government was introducing reform agenda that can be described as a mixture of economic liberalism and conservatism. The ineffective and delayed response to COVID-19 was surprising given Brazil's history of responding capably and promptly with successful policies and services as well as its efficacy in controlling health risks and disease such as smoking, HIV/AIDS, and, more recently, the Zika virus. (.....) Unfortunately, the denialist stance by Brazil's Federal Government and pro-government protestors has generated a polarized political conflict with most state and local governments, as well as with the scientific and academic community (Dal Paz, Levcovitz and Bahia 2021, 390).

As Dal Paz, Levcovitz and Bahia remind us of why Brazil is an interesting case. One thing that is different in Brazil now from when they tackled the other mentioned health crisis in the quote above, is that Brazil now is governed by a populist president. When Folha interviewed the World Health Organization Assistant Director General for Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals Mariângela Simão in the middle of March 2020, she pointed to an interesting

fact (Zanini 2020). Simão told Folha that Brazil had a unified Health System with a “reasonably efficient epidemiological surveillance structure”, after saying she had seen some neglect in Brazil in the sense that a perception some showed about the virus only having an effect on people over 65 years, was not true (Zanini 2020). Simão, the Assistant Director expressed that Brazil was expected to tackle the pandemic in accordance with its good Health System (Zanini 2020).

After analysing the Folha articles concerning COVID-19 and Bolsonaro, using the search words "coronavirus Bolsonaro", I have observed to which extent the four mechanisms have been present. Analysing the Folha database it became clear that some discussions, topics, and subjects were more frequently written about. As I have provided an overview of the publications and which tendencies have been yielding month by month, I now dedicate the following pages to look more deeply into blaming outsiders and victims, contempt for institutions, denialism, and suspicion of elites.

The four mechanisms occur to different extents and at different times with different intensity. Firstly, my analysis found Mechanism (1) Blaming outsiders and victims to be evident all through the year 2020. At the beginning of the pandemic, Bolsonaro blamed the media. This phase was followed by Bolsonaro blaming China and the "faggot" behaviour he meant people were showing, in the later part of 2020.³⁰ The mechanism of blaming outsiders and victims did not go away, but it changed the character and group defined as outsider or victim. Secondly, I found that the mechanism (2) Contempt for institutions was also present in Bolsonaro's COVID-19 approach all year in 2020. The contempt for the Ministry of Health strongly influenced Bolsonaro's approach to the pandemic in the starting phase (from March throughout May). That was followed by Bolsonaro fighting the Supreme Federal Court the rest of the year.

Thirdly, the mechanism (3) Denialism my analysis found to be characterising Bolsonaro's COVID-19 attitude the whole year of 2020. Bolsonaro's denialism was strongest and most intensive in the first half of 2020. Bolsonaro denied the seriousness of COVID-19 by refusing

³⁰ Disclaimer: The language used when citing Bolsonaro does not represent the opinions, views, or values of the author. The language used when citing Bolsonaro is not modified despite being hateful. Bolsonaro's language (including his hate-speech) is kept intact and cited as directly as possible given the translation, in order to show just how hateful and vile his language and rhetoric is.

to comply with restrictions to prevent spread such as refusing to wear a mask, touch, greet and hug supporters, cause agglomerations, deny the scientific effect and importance of a potential vaccine and constantly arguing for the use of hydroxychloroquine. From August 2020 Bolsonaro's denialism became less intense and mostly focused on promoting and defending hydroxychloroquine. Finally, mechanism (4) Suspicion of Elites was somewhat overlapping with mechanism (2) contempt for institutions, nevertheless, I did find that Bolsonaro's populism regarding COVID-19 did have a suspicion of elites. It is worth noticing that several publications used in the analysis are exemplified as containing more than one mechanism. In other words: the mechanism is somewhat overlapping in the Folha coverage, and several Folha publications containing one mechanism indeed contained several of the other mechanisms.

4.3.2.1 Mechanism (1): “Blaming Outsiders and Victims”

“The populist rhetoric animates, specifies the significance of, and justifies the popular mobilization; and the popular mobilization instantiates the populist rhetoric in concrete political activities” (Jansen 2017, 33).

By performing some structured searches in the Folha de São Paulo, I display to which extent Bolsonaro have been using rhetoric to blame outsiders and victims. As presented in the theory chapter, there are mainly two potential consequences: (1) it becomes increasingly challenging to find the actual cause of the pandemic and why it spreads. (2): it may also lead to an underestimation of the pandemic. By analysing the Folha data I find Bolsonaro's approach to COVID-19 several signs of Bolsonaro blaming outsiders and victims. I also find that Bolsonaro largely underestimates the pandemic in his rhetoric. That causes difficulty in finding the actual cause of the pandemic and why it spreads.

McKee et al. (2020, 2) as well as Greer et al. (2017, 40) argue that the populist politicians of the contemporary world today display an approach where they aim at appealing to groups in society that have been left behind for various reasons such as for example the loss of traditional industries. Populists furthermore sees a room of opportunity exploiting a misfortunate group who is searching for someone to blame, resulting in populists creating a narrative where the blame for the misfortune is placed on an identifiably different group (McKee et al. 2020, 2).

McKee et al. (2020, 2), as well as Greer et al. (2017, 40), argue that the populist politicians of the contemporary world today display an approach where they aim at appealing to groups in

society that have been left behind for various reasons such as the loss of traditional industries. Populists furthermore see a room of opportunity exploiting a misfortunate group who is searching for someone to blame, resulting in populists creating a narrative where the blame for the misfortune is placed on an identifiably different group (McKee et al. 2020, 2). On December 20th, 2020, an article titled "See what Bolsonaro has already done to confront measures to combat the coronavirus" was published in the Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo (Arcanjo 2020a).³¹ The journalist, Daniela Arcanjo based in São Paulo mainly reporting on politics and economics, entered the article with the lead paragraph: "President makes offensive in sequence against almost unanimous recommendations of doctors and scholars".^{32, 33} The article referred to a pronouncement made by Bolsonaro on March the 24th 2020, where the President attacked governors and the press by giving the press the fault for the worsening health crisis. The pronouncement ended with Bolsonaro saying he would not get infected due to his "athlete's history" (Arcanjo 2020a). In the Folha coverage on Bolsonaro and COVID-19, Bolsonaro does not often place blame where it belongs. Instead of telling people to keep a social distance and follow the measures from the WHO, Bolsonaro turns a blind eye to those recommendations and continuously fights them, mainly through his contempt for the institutions. As a consequence, it becomes increasingly challenging to find the actual cause of the pandemic and why it spreads.

Furthermore, The COVID-19 vaccine got much attention in the Folha coverage during the fall and winter of 2020. Bolsonaro stated that the Chinese vaccine would not be effective, saying it did not generate confidence because of its country of origin (Arcanjo 2020a). Although Bolsonaro to a lesser degree can be said to explicitly blame outsiders and victims, he did in November addressed the Brazilian public by saying that Brazil had to "stop being a faggott country" and face the coronavirus pandemic (Chaib 2020, my translation).³⁴ Bolsonaro implied that the high numbers of deaths and infections had to do with the "faggott" way Brazilians were handling COVID-19. McKee et al. (2020, 2) state that populists may create a narrative where they blame a groups actions for the misfortune. And this group pointed out as perpetrators are often identifiably different from the victims (McKee et al. 2020, 2). In the case of Brazil and

³¹ Original ´ in Portuguese: Veja o que Bolsonaro já fez para confrontar medidas de combate ao coronavírus

³² «Ingress» på norsk. Den korte teksten som følger rett etter tittel.

³³ Original in Portuguese: "Presidente faz ofensiva em sequência contra recomendações quase unânimes de médicos e estudiosos".

³⁴ My translation. The original quote is: "Brasil tem que deixar de ser um país de maricas, diz Bolsonaro sobre o combate à pandemia do coronavírus" (Chaib 2020b).

COVID-19, Bolsonaro rhetoric as displayed in Folha 2020 coverage, does include Bolsonaro implying and blaming groups for COVID-19, although not to a very extensive degree. As the timeline in Figure 4.3. Have shown, this blaming of outsiders and victims did not end but changed form.

Bolsonaro's rhetoric concerning COVID-19 shows signs of placing blame on victims and outsiders. The populist style that is evident in Bolsonaro's way of leading, contain elements of him blaming outsiders and victims, creating false narratives, blaming the press and media, and distrusting the quality of the Chinese vaccine due to its country of origin. Bolsonaro blamed the media in the starting phase of the pandemic (March-July), and then placed blame and mistrust towards China and "Faggots" towards the end of the year 2020. As made account for in my chapter on theory, there are several potential consequences of the mechanism of blaming outsiders and victims.

As made account for in the theory chapter, there are mainly two consequences: (1) it becomes increasingly challenging to find the actual cause of the pandemic and why it spreads. (2): it may also lead to an underestimation of the pandemic. I argue that Bolsonaro's approach to COVID-19 as seen with a lens of mechanism (1) blaming outsiders and victims, by the method: analysing the Folha coverage, there are clear signs of Bolsonaro blaming outsiders and victims, as well as an underestimation of the pandemic and a difficulty in finding the actual cause of the pandemic and why it spreads in Bolsonaro's rhetoric.

4.3.2.2 Mechanism (2): “Contempt for Institutions”

As opposed to stable institutions, contempt for institutions may result in an unstable and unpredictable ad hoc attitude in policy responses. Bolsonaro's contempt for institutions was to a large degree evident in the Folha coverage. The President's attitude towards COVID-19 was more than anything characterised by his contempt for institutions. Having that said, the contempt for institutions is at some points challenging to differentiate from the suspicion of elites, as the first feature of contempt for institutions is contempt for elites and for traditional institutions that are populated by elites (McKee and Struckler 2017, 669). Nevertheless, I have chosen to handle all relevant data related to The Supreme Federal Court and the different

Governors in this section, under "contempt for institutions". Some of the incidents mentioned here contain features of the other mechanisms. This is done to avoid repetition.

Potential consequences of contempt for elites we might look for are that the policy may be wobbly and vary over time, messaged going out to the public may be contradicting what other institutions signalise, and the response to the pandemic might be inefficient as a result of this. Folha reporters Lee, Schiavon and Quirolo (2020, my translation) state that: "From March to June, the country experienced a period of political tension fuelled weekly by the friction of President Jair Bolsonaro (without a party) with governors,³⁵ Congress, and the Supreme Federal Court, in addition to his contempt for the coronavirus".

The publication goes on arguing that Bolsonaro and his relationship with the Supreme Federal Court was the most turbulent one. At the beginning of the pandemic, Folha reported on February 29th that, unlike international and other national leaders, Bolsonaro had a more discrete tone in the fight against COVID-19. Minister of Health (at the time) Luiz Henrique Mandetta lead the fight against COVID-19 (Coletta and Fernandes 2020). On March 15th, 2020, Bolsonaro participated in a pro-government protest calling for military intervention (Coletta et al. 2020). During this protest, Bolsonaro ignored COVID-19 guidelines by touching supporters, not wearing a mask, and holding several protesters cell phones to take selfies. Even though Bolsonaro at first said the protest would be postponed and held at a later time, he changed his tone and used his social media heavily to encourage demonstrations in different parts of the country (Coletta et al. 2020). Brazil had 200 confirmed cases and 1917 suspected cases of COVID-19 at the time (Arcanjo 2020a). A similar situation occurred on the 19th of April Bolsonaro participated in and encouraged supporters to participate in a protest in Brasília. Bolsonaro criticised several public institutions both implicitly and explicitly. The protest called for the Supreme Federal Court to close, and for military intervention (Arcanjo 2020b). Bolsonaro went against the advice of the Ministry of Health by encouraging crowds to form. During this protest, Bolsonaro spoke to the protesters saying: "It is now the people in power, you have an obligation to fight for your country", and "everyone in Brazil has to understand that they are submissive to the will of the Brazilian people" (Arcanjo 2020b, my translation).

³⁵ "De março a junho, o país viveu período de tensão política alimentada semanalmente por atritos do presidente Jair Bolsonaro (sem partido) com governadores, Congresso e Supremo Tribunal Federal, além do menosprezo dele ao coronavírus" (Lee, Shiavon and Quirolo 2020).

"There are certain governors who are taking extreme measures that are not up to them, such as closing airports, highways, shopping malls and fairs," said the President on March 20th (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). The day after, Bolsonaro continues attacking Witzel (governor to Rio), and Doria (governor to São Paulo) who Folha characterise as two of Bolsonaro's main critiques regarding his COVID-19 approach, in addition to both being potential presidential candidates for the next Brazilian election (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). When Doria imposed a 15-day quarantine for the state of São Paulo mandatory closing shops, bars, and restaurants, Bolsonaro said "[Doria] is a lunatic. It is making politics on this crisis" (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation). Bolsonaro released a statement on March 24th, 2020, where he attacked governors and blamed them: "Soon the people will know that they have been deceived by these governors and by a large part of the media in this issue of the coronavirus" (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation).

McKee et al. list that "the second feature is populist's attitude towards public health institutions. Populist leaders tend to discredit, neglect, deny necessary funding and leave key positions unfilled within the public health institutions." (Carvalho and Lopes 2020). During this protest, Bolsonaro's rhetoric when speaking to the protesters was characterised by *mechanism suspicion of elites* as the President creates a narrative between the institutions he is criticising (The Supreme Court, the Congress, the governors) and the "reasonable" people (his supporters).

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the President and the at-the-time minister of health disagreed (Cancian 2020b). The battle between Bolsonaro and Luiz Henrique Mandetta who was minister of Health at the starting phase of the pandemic is a clear manifestation of Bolsonaro's contempt for institutions. I also found this battle to cause a predicted consequence: wobbly and unstable policies. Mandetta frequently and repeatedly disagreed with Bolsonaro and even contradicted him publicly on actions to combat the coronavirus (Chaib and Uribe 2020). Mandetta was fired by Bolsonaro on April the 16th. Bolsonaro criticised and blamed Mandetta on several occasions, expressing distrust towards the ministry of health as a public institution, blaming Mandetta for the loss of lives caused by COVID-19 as Mandetta had refused to use/encourage the use of hydroxychloroquine (Boldrini 2020). The Minister to follow Mandetta was Nelson Teich, who Bolsonaro said he chose because he expected Teich to be able to act balancing preventing coronavirus deaths yet minimizing the economic impact of the restrictions (Chaib and Uribe 2020). Teich who had support within the military

institutions (A institution Bolsonaro has high regards for) ended up serving as Minister of Health for one month, before resigning in May 2020 after being pressured to expand the use of hydroxychloroquine (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). In denying the seriousness of the pandemic the President fired two ministers of health who did not comply with his views on restrictions and priorities in the pandemic. According to Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo (2020), two minister layoffs stand out: Sergio Moro (Minister of Justice) and Luiz Henrique Mandetta (Minister of Health). Moro, who is a former judge, left the post accusing Bolsonaro of trying to interfere with the Federal Police. The allegation led to an investigation.

On June 6th the government restricted the release of COVID-19 data in Brazil. The Ministry of Health's data portal had gone offline the previous night showing only the numbers registered the last day. A couple of days later, the Ministry of Health announced that it would keep cumulating numbers of deaths and confirmed COVID-19 cases (Arcanjo 2020a). Bolsonaro confirmed that the methodology for disclosure of COVID-19 data would be changed. Folha stated that the change would mean the disclosure of numbers of minor deaths-, adding to the criticism that the government intended to manipulate the data from the pandemic (Folha de São Paulo 2020u). When Bolsonaro was later asked about the change in methodology during a visit to Formosa, he refused to answer (Folha de São Paulo 2020u). The new methodology went against what the WHO recommend, and the model Brazil abandoned is used by virtually all countries (Arcanjo 2020a). Brazilian official numbers will now only be reported to show total recoveries, new cases, and deaths in the last 24 hours (Folha de São Paulo 2020v). An attempt for enforcing sanctions was introduced when the at the time Minister of Health Mandetta and former Minister of Justice Sergio Moro signed an ordinance that established punishment for those who failed to comply with medical orders and health authorities during the COVID-19 outbreak in Brazil (Onofre 2020). Folha wrote about this saying the current (new) ministers of health and justice revoked the rule after pressure from Bolsonaro. Bolsonaro had criticized the measures that were originally signed in March. In addition to that, the publication by Onofre states that Bolsonaro is against applying quarantine to contain the expansion of COVID-19 (2020). Thus, I argue that Bolsonaro discredited the ministry of health as an institution's authority showing contempt for institutions, resulting in mixed signals on correct containment behaviour going out to the public.

Furthermore, Bolsonaro showed contempt for institutions in a publicity video summarizing and officially communicating the government's proposal for the pandemic from March the 27th (Arcanjo 2020a). Folha wrote that the President's son (who is a Senator) Flávio Bolsonaro, shared the video on the social media accounts constituting the Bolsonarista network.³⁶ The video repeated the message “Brazil cannot stop”.³⁷ The message of the video was in contrast with the message from health authorities, and on March 28th the Federal Court in Rio de Janeiro prevented the campaign from being broadcasted on radio, TV, Newspapers, Magazines, Websites or any other medium both physically and digitally (Arcanjo 2020a). On March 26th, 2020, Bolsonaro by decree characterised religious activities and lottery houses as essential activities that could not be prevented during the COVID-19 pandemic (Arcanjo 2020a). The day after, The Federal Court suspended Bolsonaro's decree's validity.³⁸ The Federal Court prohibited the Federal Government from adopting measures contrary to social isolation as means of prevention. What I wish to underline by mentioning this incident is to exemplify how Bolsonaro undermines and “battles” the institution by fighting their decision to make people socially isolate (Arcanjo 2020a).

The Federal Court prohibited the Federal Government from adopting measures contrary to social isolation as means of prevention. What I wish to underline by mentioning this incident is to exemplify how Bolsonaro undermines and "battles" the institution by fighting their decision to make people socially isolate (Arcanjo 2020a). Furthermore, Bolsonaro criticized the governor of São Paulo (João Doria) and the Governor of Rio (Wilson Witzel) saying they were committing civil disobedience when they ignored the Presidents wish to expand the number of activities considered essential (Arcanjo 2020a).

³⁶ A Brazilian study published September 2020 analysed almost 200,000 messages from 21 support groups for Bolsonaro, between September and November (Piaia and Alves 2020, 136). The study found that: “i) a small group of participants concentrated most of the posts; ii) the most shared links include other social media, such as YouTube and Facebook; iii) there were centralized actions of campaign to neutralize damages to the image of Bolsonaro, as well as to coordinate votes for its parliamentary base. The results show the potentialities of using WhatsApp, but also emphasize that the application should be understood within a broader communicative network.” (Piaia and Alves 2020, 136).

Furthermore, the study underlined that they saw a “consolidation of professional practices in parallel with the efforts of volunteers through extensive network infrastructures that interconnect and feedback various platforms, often beyond the boundary of practices considered legal by the national regulatory framework.” (Piaia and Alves 2020, 136).

³⁷ My translation. The original text was: “O Brasil não pode parar”

³⁸ Original titled: “Justiça Federal” (Arcanjo 2020a).

In July the Brazilian Senate approved a proposal to impose a new law restricting fake news, which Bolsonaro criticized saying he would veto the bill in turn (Caram 2020c). The President justified the veto saying the bill would limit freedom of expression.

The proposal which was approved by the Senate entails the requirement to keep the records of the message forwarding chain on WhatsApp thus making it possible to identify the source of illegal content (Caram 2020c).³⁹ Only messages forwarded more than five times (which constitutes virtualization) will be stored and only made accessible by court order when the message has reached a thousand or more users (Caram 2020c).⁴⁰

According to Mudde and Kaltwasser, populists often question the legitimacy of liberal institutions, such as the rule of law (2012, 14). Much of the Folha coverage on Bolsonaro and the coronavirus has been about Bolsonaro fighting with institutions and their expert advice, such as the Ministry of Health or The Supreme Federal Court. Another example of that is when Bolsonaro encouraged followers to enter hospitals and start filming on June 11, he did so knowing that entry to health facilities without authorization is not allowed (Arcanjo 2020a).

“[If] There is a field hospital or a public hospital near you, find a way to get in and film. A lot of people are doing this, and more people have to do it to show if the beds are occupied or not. If the expenses are compatible or not. It helps us” (Arcanjo 2020a, my translation).⁴¹ The following day, Gilmar Mendes a Justice of the Supreme Federal Court tweeted that the Public Ministry should act against those who defend this practice: "Invading hospitals is a crime – encouraging it too. The Public Ministry (The PGR and the State MPs) must act immediately. It is shameful – not to say ridiculous – that public officials lend themselves to feeding conspiracy theories, putting public health at risk", wrote Gilmar on Twitter (Arcanjo 2020a, my translation).⁴² This shows how Bolsonaro and an institution, in this case, the Supreme Federal Court, is battling publicly disagreeing on a major subject. Bolsonaro does not show respect for

³⁹ The most popular messaging application in Brazil. Over 95% of internet users in Brazil use the application (Webcertain 2020).

⁴⁰ “To spread something virally, throughout the internet by aggregation and distribution on social media sites, streaming sites and other methods of social content sharing” (Collins 2021).

⁴¹ The original quote: “[Se] Tem hospital de campanha perto de você, hospital público, arranja uma maneira de entrar e filmar. Muita gente está fazendo isso e mais gente tem que fazer para mostrar se os leitos estão ocupados ou não. Se os gastos são compatíveis ou não. Isso nos ajuda” (Arcanjo 2020a).

⁴² The original quote: “Invadir hospitais é crime – estimular também. O Ministério Público (a PGR e os MPs Estaduais) devem atuar imediatamente. É vergonhoso – para não dizer ridículo – que agentes públicos se prestem a alimentar teorias da conspiração, colocando em risco a saúde pública” (Arcanjo 2020a).

the law nor the public health sector. I argue that this is a piece of clear evidence for Bolsonaro showing contempt for an institution.

Another example of this is the use of masks in Brazil. Bolsonaro laid down several vetoes on the mask bill in July (Arcanjo 2020a). That very bill had been approved by Congress earlier the same month. Bolsonaro managed to veto and remove many articles of the law so that the final version that got approved was a very weak version of the original (Arcanjo 2020a). Folha has addressed the situation with the COVID-19 vaccine. Bolsonaro's behaviour and attitude towards the vaccine contain elements of both contempt for institutions, denialism, suspicion of elites and blaming outsiders and victims. In October, the Minister of Health Pazuello said he sought to require doses of the Chinese vaccine to be used in Brazil. Following Pazuello's plans, Bolsonaro publicly denied buying the Chinese vaccine saying it would not happen (Arcanjo 2020a). In December Folha reported that Bolsonaro changed his mind several times regarding the vaccine (Arcanjo 2020a).

Contempt for institutions is as opposed to stable institutions, an unstable and unpredictable ad hoc attitude in policy responses. It became evident analysing Bolsonaro's contempt for institutions that it was to a large degree evident characterising the Folha coverage on Bolsonaro and COVID-19. McKee et al (2020, 2) state that a prominent feature of contempt for institutions is contempt for elites and traditional institutions that are populated by elites. Bolsonaro shows contempt for these institutions by his way of ignoring their guidelines and policies in handling COVID-19. More than anything dominating Bolsonaro's populism is his contempt for institutions. There is much evidence in the Folha coverage to support this notion. Bolsonaro repeatedly ignored COVID-19 guidelines set by the ministry of health. The President touching supporters, abstained from wearing a mask, encouraged several demonstrations which caused crowding as well as personally participating several times in protests, encouraged his supporters to enter public hospitals and film, took selfies with fans. Even though Bolsonaro at first said the protest would be postponed and held at a later time, he changed tone and used his social media heavily to encourage demonstrations in different parts of the country on more than one occasion. My analysis made it clear that Bolsonaro has shown several signs of contempt for institutions. He has fired two ministers of health at an extremely critical stage in the pandemic (in April and May 2020). In addition to not following the guidelines set by his ministers of health, Bolsonaro has criticized their work, argued against their advice, and spread

misinformation about his ministers of health's "wrongful" understanding of how to avoid spreading COVID-19. Furthermore, The Supreme Federal Court and Bolsonaro have been in a battle throughout the pandemic, constantly fighting and disagreeing on what information to spread and what information to view as truthful.

As mentioned in the theory chapter: one main consequence of contempt for institutions is how politics may be wobbly and vary in an unforeseen way. Bolsonaro has certainly vetoed, refused, and fought against his institutions and their attempts to impose and successfully implement COVID-19 restrictions. My analysis leaves no doubt that Bolsonaro attitude towards COVID-19 is heavily characterised by him showing contempt for institutions. The time that Bolsonaro could have used to respond to the pandemic may be wasted by arguing and fighting between the different institutions as they keep disagreeing. I also found that there have been contradicting messages on COVID-19 going out to the public. This was defined as a potential consequence of contempt for institutions.

4.3.2.3 Mechanism (3): “Denialism”

Populists practice the art of denialism (Moffitt and Tormey 2014, 392). They reject evidence by being reluctant to be constrained by institutions (Akkerman 2003, 156). In addition to showing contempt for institutions, Bolsonaro's populism is heavily characterised by him denying the seriousness of COVID-19. By denying the seriousness of the pandemic Bolsonaro also showed contempt for the institutions (health) as they made policies and statements stressing the seriousness of the situation. These are in other words somewhat overlapping, and several Folha publications containing mechanism (3) Denialism, indeed contained several of the mechanisms (2) Contempt for institutions. As mentioned in the theory chapter, denialism may result in a delay in response. Furthermore, denialism may cause large conflicts between institutions such as a ministry of health and the populist. Lastly, denialism can prevent the public from receiving truthful and valuable information on the health crisis.

Bolsonaro's approach to the pandemic has been repeatedly downplaying its seriousness. On March the 17th 2020 Folha interviewed Brazilian economist Rodrigo Soares, professor at Columbia University and "one of Brazils most respected economists in academia" (Fraga 2020). At this early phase of the pandemic, Folha wrote "... Soares sees Brazil having some advantages, such as the existence of a unified health system and the fact that the Ministry of Health has

demonstrated, from the beginning, to be attentive to the pandemic" (Fraga 2020). Furthermore, Soares says that Brazil did not take things as serious as it should and that Bolsonaro referred to COVID-19 as a "small crisis" (Fraga 2020).

In Bolsonaro's third radio and television statement concerning COVID-19, Bolsonaro said that the government had since the beginning of the crisis been concerned with containing "panic and hysteria" (Coletta 2020k). Bolsonaro compared COVID-19 to a "cold" or a "flue" saying the media intensified the situation to spread hysteria (Coletta 2020k, my translation). McKee et al. explained the mechanism of denialism by quoting UK prime minister Boris Johnson who had advised the public to go about with their normal daily lives. The Brazilian populist Bolsonaro have done similarly. At the very beginning of the pandemic in March 2020, Bolsonaro said in an interview with CNN Brazil which was mentioned in a Folha publication, that the measures taken in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic were "extremism" and "hysteric" (Carvalho and Resende 2020). Furthermore, a few days later, Bolsonaro spoke publicly at a press conference saying that it would not be this "small flue" that would knock him down,⁴³ implicitly downplaying the seriousness of COVID-19 referring to it as not only a "flue" but a small one (Uribe, Chaib and Coletta 2020). Bolsonaro on several occasions demonstrated that he denied the pandemic by encouraging people to participate, and by participating himself in protests with large crowds. Bolsonaro also participated in a protest on March 29, where Bolsonaro defended the population's return to work (Arcanjo 2020a). On that same day, the President ignoring directions from the Minister of Health himself, Bolsonaro drove out to visit local shops and causing crowding in Brasilia (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). Bolsonaro uploaded videos from his Brasilia tour on Twitter. That night, Twitter for the first time deletes posts from the President on the network. The video from the Brasilia tour got removed by Twitter based on being content violating the rules of use by potentially putting people at greater risk of transmitting the virus (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). Following Twitter, Facebook also decides to delete publications posted on the President's platform. Facebook stated it could "cause real harm to people", and that it was "misinformation". The Facebook post was also from the Brasilia tour (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation).

⁴³ My translation. The original phrase is Portuguese was "gripezinha" (Uribe, Chaib and Coletta 2020).

Furthermore, Bolsonaro participated in the protest in Brasília on April 19th (Arcanjo 2020b): “by joining the protesters, Bolsonaro once again encouraged crowds in the midst of the new coronavirus pandemic, contrary to recommendations from the WHO and the Ministry of Health” (2020, my translation). On March 17th Bolsonaro said: “this virus brought a certain hysteria”.⁴⁴ The following day he participated in demonstrations causing agglomerations. He then posted on his social media “I inform you that my 2nd test for COVID-19 was NEGATIVE.⁴⁵ Good evening everyone” (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation).

Bolsonaro frequently went out in the streets contrary to guidelines from both the WHO and the Minister of Health (Mandetta at this time). On April 9th, Bolsonaro walked around to go to the bakery. The Next day, Bolsonaro visited the Armed Forces Hospital as well as a pharmacy in the Southwest of the country (Arcanjo 2020a). The same day, Bolsonaro is reported "he first scratches his nose with the back of his right hand, seconds later, starts greeting an elderly woman and other supporters" (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation). Moffitt and Tormey (2014, 392) who consider the ideational approach to populism say that populists choose/cherry-pick evidence coming from experts. Folha reported that Bolsonaro when asked about how he defended wanting to reopen schools while numbers of deaths were high and still rising, Bolsonaro answered that he was not an undertaker and that he no longer wanted to talk about the relationship between COVID-19 mortality and restrictive measures (Saldaña 2020). On June 22nd Bolsonaro appealed to governors and mayors to start reopening trade. Bolsonaro stated, "there may have been a bit of an exaggeration" in the way the WHO and other authorities dealt with the pandemic of the new coronavirus (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). Although Brazil just passed a total of 50 thousand COVID-19 deaths, Bolsonaro did not say anything about it (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020).Bolsonaro demonstrated that he chooses which evidence he wants to relate to, and which he wants to deny. This article (and quote by Bolsonaro) was also discussed in a Folha publication by Folia's editorial secretary written by Roberto Dias, with the title "The coronavirus created a new kind of denialist" (Dias 2020, my translation).

According to McKeen et al. denialism is something to be expected to be found at the core of populist's empirical approach to COVID-19 (2020, 2). The World Health Organization has

⁴⁴ “Esse vírus trouxe uma certa histeria” (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020).

⁴⁵ «Informo que meu 2º teste para COVID-19 deu NEGATIVO. Boa noite a todos” (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020).

advised against large groups of people coming together and causing agglomerations. The WHO has also advised to limit social contact as much as possible (World Health Organization 2020g). Despite these guidelines, Folha report that Bolsonaro has on several occasions caused agglomerations ignoring social distancing and not abstaining from physical contact (Arcanjo 2020a). When Bolsonaro went to Goiás on May 2nd, he caused crowds to take photos, hugged people including the elderly and touched people (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). "...Bolsonaro went to other centres of agglomeration and removed his mask while greeting supporters" (Arcanjo 2020a).⁴⁶ On June the 27th he again caused crowding when we went to visit Minas Gerais. He then did not wear a mask, greeted supporters without maintaining the appropriate distance (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). A few days later, on July 7th, Bolsonaro announced that he had contracted COVID-19: "I'm perfectly fine", Bolsonaro announced wearing a facemask to CNN Brazil in an interview (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation).

Another example of a phenomenon Bolsonaro focuses on by "cherry picking evidence", is Bolsonaro handling of hydroxychloroquine (also known as chloroquine). Former U.S President Trump fired the director of the US health department's Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority on the support for the use of hydroxychloroquine (Smith 2020b). Similarly, to Trump, Bolsonaro denied the evidence on hydroxychloroquine by firing two ministers of health who refused to give in and comply with Bolsonaro policy to actively push for the use of the remedy in COVID-19 treatment (Folha De São Paulo 2020t). As seen in table 4.4, Bolsonaro defended the use of hydroxychloroquine starting from April and throughout the rest of 2020.

Bolsonaro continued to promote the alleged effect of hydroxychloroquine despite publications of international studies denying the effect (Watanabe 2020). Bolsonaro chooses which studies he wants to listen to, and thereby denies a large share of information.

In a Folha article from the 6th of August 2020, Bolsonaro is quoted: "We had a protocol from the Minister of Health that ordered hydroxychloroquine to be applied only in serious conditions.

⁴⁶My translation. The original frase: "...Bolsonaro foi até outros focos de aglomeração e retirou a máscara enquanto cumprimentava os simpatizantes." (Arcanjo 2020a).

It is throwing away pills. You don't need to have knowledge or brains to understand that it is throwing away pills and losing lives" (Carvalho and Lopes 2020, my translation).⁴⁷

A different example of Bolsonaro denying evidence by cherry-picking is how the President have been defending "vertical isolation" (Arcanjo 2020a). This without any type of study. Bolsonaro has been arguing that a "vertical isolation" would consist of isolating only those who are at risk, namely the elderly and people with underlying diseases (Arcanjo 2020a).

By July, the virus had hit its peak in numbers of new cases of infection and deaths. During a visit to Rio Grande Do Sul in the capacity of opening a new military school, Bolsonaro told the press: "I am sorry. I am sorry for the deaths. People die every day from a series of causes. Its life, its life....", "What are you afraid of? Face it!" (Sperb 2020, my translation). Again, in November, Bolsonaro addressed the Brazilian public by saying that Brazil had to "stop being a faggott country" and face the coronavirus pandemic (Chaib 2020, my translation).⁴⁸

Bolsonaro's rhetoric when facing the public was often, more than anything, characterised by his constant denialism of the seriousness of COVID-19. Regarding the subject of the COVID-19 vaccine, Bolsonaro first stated that he did not want to force anyone to take the vaccine (Carvalho, Uribe and Cancian 2020). After displaying Denialism (McKee et al. 2020,s) by denying the importance and necessity of the vaccine it later became known that Bolsonaro had signed a law stating compulsory vaccination (Folha De São Paulo 2020s). Folha reported that in October Bolsonaro answered a supporter who on the internet expressed fear for the vaccine, whereby Bolsonaro answered "It will not be purchased" (in capital letters) (Arcanjo 2020a). By December however, the vaccine was considered a fundamental part of the Brazilian immunization program (Arcanjo 2020a). On December 17th Bolsonaro once again declared that he would not take the COVID-19 vaccine, after which he defended hydroxychloroquine (Valadares 2020). Two days later on December 19th Bolsonaro said "... Hurrying for the vaccine is not justified, because it will affect people's lives" despite the recent increase in cases

⁴⁷ My translation. The original quote was: "Tínhamos um protocolo do ministro de Saúde que mandava aplicar apenas em estado grave a hidroxicloroquina. É jogar comprimido fora. Não precisa ter conhecimento nem cérebro para entender que é jogar comprimido fora e perder vidas"

⁴⁸ My translation. The original quote is: "“Brasil tem que deixar de ser um país de queers”, diz Bolsonaro sobre o combate à pandemia do coronavírus” (Chaib 2020).

and deaths (Arcanjo 2020a, my translation).⁴⁹ However, against the vaccine, Bolsonaro seemed on the 19th, by the 27th he had a different view. In a social network, Bolsonaro wrote that government is "in a hurry to obtain a safe, effective, and quality vaccine (...)" (Arcanjo 2020a, my translation).⁵⁰ Bolsonaro denying the seriousness of the pandemic became evident the day Brazil passed the 10,000 dead marks by COVID-19 (Arcanjo 2020a). Dias Toffoli, the President of the Supreme Federal Court released a statement underlining how grave the situation was. The Judiciary and the Legislative declared mourning (Arcanjo 2020a). The Senate hoisted the flag at half-mast and declared that any celebrations or festivities were forbidden within the National Congress while the mourning lasts. Amid this, Bolsonaro toured one of Brazils "postcard" destinations; Lake Paranoà, where he spent the afternoon with a water bike ride (Arcanjo 2020a).

Again, in November, Bolsonaro addressed the Brazilian public saying that Brazil had to “stop being a faggott country⁵¹” and face the coronavirus pandemic (Chaib 2020, my translation). Bolsonaro’s rhetoric when facing the public was often, more than anything, characterised by his constant denialism of the seriousness of COVID-19.

When COVID-19 hit Brazil (and Folha's publications) in March and onwards, Bolsonaro advised the public to go about with their live normal lives, expressing no need for the "extremism" and "hysteria" he characterised the ministry of health's preventive measures as. Diethelm and McKee (2009, 2-3) argue that denialism includes populists promoting cherry-picking evidence. My analysis found that Bolsonaro on several occasions demonstrated that he cherry-picked his evidence by ignoring evidence from the WHO on the negative effect of crowding. Bolsonaro frequently encouraged people to participate and participated in large crowds such as protests. Furthermore, the analysis showed that Bolsonaro cherry-picked evidence by ignoring directions from the ministry of health, by driving out and seeking large crowds of supporters. When seeking out these crowds, Folha reported that Bolsonaro often touched people, did not wear a mask, hugged the elderly and did not withhold the guidelines of social distance. After which, Bolsonaro posted videos of his tour to Brasilia in March, both

⁴⁹Original quote: “(...)Pressa para a vacina não se justifica, porque você mexe com a vida das pessoas” (Arcanjo 2020a).

⁵⁰ The original quote: “(...) Pressa para obter uma vacina segura, eficaz e com qualidade(...)” (Arcanjo 2020a).

⁵¹ My translation. The original quote is: “‘Brasil tem que deixar de ser um país de queers’, diz Bolsonaro sobre o combate à pandemia do coronavírus” (Chaib 2020).

Twitter and Facebook ended up deleting the content Bolsonaro had uploaded of his tour. The two networks said it was "misinformation" and that it "caused real harm to people", potentially putting people at risk of transmitting the virus.

McKee et al. (2020, 2) also listed in addition to cherry-picking evidence, that a populists denialism makes him/her promote conspiracy theories, false expertise, moving goalposts and employing a range of logical fallacies. The list of times and subjects for when Bolsonaro have denied the seriousness of the pandemic is long. Bolsonaro defended the reopening of schools while the number of deaths was still rising. When Brazil passed a total of 50,000 COVID-19 deaths, Bolsonaro did not address it. After changing the methodology for disclosure of COVID-19 data, Bolsonaro refused to answer when questioned about why. Denialism may lead to a delay in response. In the Bolsonaro case, much evidence suggests that Bolsonaro had a delayed response; throughout 2020 he constantly denied the seriousness of the pandemic and presented no response, which thus means a delayed response, in adopting or promoting containment measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Bolsonaro's response may be very late, or it just might never show up.

Furthermore, Bolsonaro showed who he cherry-picked evidence in the hydroxychloroquine matter. From April and for the rest of 2020, Bolsonaro kept arguing for the use of the remedy which never had any scientific evidence of the effect on treating COVID-19. Bolsonaro fired ministers of health when they did not comply and promote the use of the remedy. In addition to that, Bolsonaro defended "vertical isolation" without any type of study to defend it. Bolsonaro on several occasions' cherry-picked evidence. When the country passed its 10,000 dead marks by COVID-19, Bolsonaro went to tour a Brazilian "postcard" destination ignoring the dead mark completely. The Folha coverage of Bolsonaro and COVID-19 in 2020, is from start till finish characterised by Bolsonaro displaying a frequent denialist approach to the pandemic.

4.3.2.4 Mechanism (4): “Suspicion of Elites”

With the suspicion of elites, the media plays an important role. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, 11-12) argued that populists typically describe the media that criticize their political message, as members of the "corrupt elite". My analysis of Bolsonaro's approach to COVID-19 and how it has been distinguished by him suspecting elites do find Bolsonaro on more than one occasion

displaying suspicion of elites. As accounted for in the theory chapter, suspicion of elites can influence to which extent the public will comply with any imposed or suggested measure related to COVID-19. Another protentional consequence of suspicion of elites is that the public might not trust correct information on virus spread and measures to take to avoid it. If the public has a suspicious and untrusty attitude towards the media, then this can have a massive influence as media are crucial in spreading information about the pandemic and the measures.

According to Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, 11-12), populists often refer to the media (especially media that criticize their political stance) as part of the "corrupt elite".

Bolsonaro several times blamed the press for the worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Bolsonaro's statement released on March 24th, 2020, he blamed the press for the worsening of the health crisis with COVID-19 (Arcanjo 2020a). "Soon the people will know that they have been deceived by these governors and by a large part of the media in this issue of the coronavirus" (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). Furthermore, Folha reported that on May 5th, Bolsonaro had told reporters to "shut up", when he was asked about the recent changes in the Federal Police (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation). On May the 25th, Folha decided due to the lack of security to suspend their news coverage from the Alvorada presidential palace port temporarily (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). The decision was due to the lack of security, as some security measures protecting reporting journalists outside the presidential palace had been weakened and removed. On that day, Bolsonaro passed by close to the reporters at the presidential palace saying, "The day you are committed to the truth, I will speak to you again" (Carvalho 2020i).

Folha reported that the crowd of supporters waiting for Bolsonaro to arrive at the Alvorada daily shouted and was swearing to journalists. Bolsonaro's supports attitude to the journalists took a sharp turn that day. People from the crowd yelled to Folha journalist: "No shame. You don't show reality." And "I don't know how you manage to sleep at night. You don't represent the Brazilian population! Communist media(...)" and "Scum! Trash! Mice! Rats! Bolsonaro until 2050! Rotten press! Communists!" and "junk media". Journalists had on several earlier occasions been physically injured by Bolsonaro's supporters demonstrating in favour of the President in front of the Alvorada (Carvalho 2020i, my translation). Other media networks also decided to suspend their coverage from the Alvorada. It becomes evident how Bolsonaro is

spreading suspicion of the media, which can have a big influence as media are important as they share information about the pandemic and the measures.

In mid-May, Bolsonaro called on a group of businessmen to pressure governors for the reopening of trade. Bolsonaro said "it is war" asking the business sector to "Play hard" with the governors (Arcanjo 2020a).^{52,53} The theory provides an understanding of the mechanism "suspicion of elites" to be that a populist sees elites in society (either cultural, economic, political) as a whole group who actively work against the "general will" of the people (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 11-12). Bolsonaro implicitly puts business interests against the interests of the local Brazilian governors. Bolsonaro also stated that there is a "political problem" where the objective is to "break the economy to reach the government" (Coletta, Caram and Uribe 2020).⁵⁴ Thus, I understand that Bolsonaro is implying that governors are shutting down businesses in an attempt to negatively influence the government.

When Bolsonaro personally attended demonstrations in Brasilia on May 3rd, he participated with his supporters who were protesting against the Supreme Federal Court and Congress. The former minister of justice, Sergio Moro was also a target of protest (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020). Bolsonaro may be perceived as joining "the people" on the street, protesting against the political elite. Following the Brasilia protest, Bolsonaro broadcasted live: "I am sure of one thing, we have the people at our side, we have the Armed Forces at the side of the people, by law, by order, by democracy, and by freedom. And more importantly, we have God with us" (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation). Bolsonaro finished the live sent statement saying: "I ask God that we don't have any problems this week. We have reached the limit, there is no more conversation, from now on, we will not only demand, we will enforce the Constitution, it will be enforced at any price, and it has a double hand" (Lee, Schiavon and Queirolo 2020, my translation).

By asking his followers to film the interior of public hospitals to "reveal" that there was a lot of free bed capacity, Bolsonaro implicitly expresses mistrust towards the public health sector. The President went live on social networks on June 11 encouraging followers to participate, saying

⁵² My translation. The original quote is: "é guerra" (Arcanjo 2020a).

⁵³ My translation. The original quote is: "Jogar pesado" (Arcanjo 2020a).

⁵⁴ My translation. The original quote is: "quebrar a economia para atingir o governo." (Coletta, Caram and Uribe 2020).

that if the images they would take showed any abnormality that would be dealt with by the Federal Government and the Federal Police (Arcanjo 2020a).

Analysing Bolsonaro's COVID-19 attitude and suspicion of elites, I found that Bolsonaro shows several signs of this. Although this was not the most prominent feature of Bolsonaro's overall populism, suspicion of elites had been present in Bolsonaro's approach to COVID-19. It is worth noticing that suspicion of elites might be challenging to separate from contempt for institutions. However, with Suspicion of Elites, the media plays an important role. As Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, 11-12) argued that populists typically describe the media that criticize their political message, as members of the "corrupt elite". I found that Bolsonaro on more than one occasion displaying suspicion of elites. My analysis found Bolsonaro calling for the closure of the Federal Supreme Court and for a military intervention using the rhetoric of having several elements of "us vs them", and "we the people" – showing suspicion of elites by framing themselves (Bolsonaro and his supporters) as "the people". Also, in line with media playing a key role in populists' approach to COVID-19 given their suspicion of elites; Bolsonaro several times blamed the press for the worsening of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to that, I found that Bolsonaro released a statement blaming the press for the worsening of the health crisis with COVID-19.

Furthermore, Folha decided due to the partial removal and weakening of security to suspend their news coverage from the Alvorada presidential palace port temporarily. A potential consequence of suspicion of elites maybe that society becomes characterised by a public not complying with the imposed or suggested measures related to COVID-19. As my analysis shows clear signs of Bolsonaro frequently encouraging crowding and thus preventing this group of the public (those who support Bolsonaro) to comply with social distancing restrictions, for one. Furthermore, as mentioned in the theory chapter, a potential consequence of suspicion of elites may be that Bolsonaro influences the public to distrust the media and their information on COVID-19 less. I argue that Bolsonaro's way of spreading suspicion of the media have made his supporters question the information provided by the media on containment measures. As Bolsonaro on several occasions blamed the press for the pandemic and called the media corrupt, this might have had serious consequences on the public acknowledging measures and adopting them, when informed by media.

4.4 Pandemic and populism – match made in heaven?

Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?

When Folha interviewed the World Health Organization Assistant Director General for Access to Medicines, Vaccines and Pharmaceuticals Mariângela Simão in the middle of March 2020 she told Folha that Brazil had a unified Health System with a “reasonably efficient epidemiological surveillance structure”. The Assistant Director expressed that Brazil was expected to tackle the pandemic in accordance with its good health system (Zanini 2020). In understanding populist behaviour and crisis management, Kavakli (2020, 3-4) argues that populists generally distrust elites to such an extent that this is defined as a key feature to populism. During the pandemic in Brazil, Bolsonaro showed distrust towards medical elites such as the WHO or his own ministry of health, for example.

Having assessed the Bolsonaro case, this provides insight on populism in relation to crisis management. Given the theoretical foundation presented in the chapter on theory I, in this following section present a discussion linking the insight to the existing theory. My choice of case to study was Brazil being a least-likely case (George and Bennett 2015, 121), and Bolsonaro, being an extreme case (Gerring 2007b, 101). Bolsonaro was presumed to following an expert-oriented/ professionally based approach to COVID-19. I assumed Brazil to handle COVID-19 similarly to western countries. Brazil has been interesting to study because of the populist president and the possibility to isolation the effect of populism. A study of a different Latin American country like Nicaragua or Honduras would involve studying an economically challenged country with weak health services and lack of medical expertise. This would likely influence our findings. In Brazil, many prerequisites to handling the pandemic relatively good, is present.

In the starting phase of this study, it became evident that Brazil had much potential to handling the COVID-19 relatively well given their expertise and level of institutions. It was also noted that if we ended up seeing a bad handling of the pandemic, then the extreme case populist Bolsonaro could be believed to have influenced the COVID-19 handling, given the nature of the case which allows for an isolation of the effect of populism. The findings are interesting. I started by expecting Brazil to be a - country given its levels of expertise and development - that should be able to respond well to the COVID-19 pandemic, yet it has not.

Various scholars who have studied populism (Jansen 2015; Mudde 2017; Zúquete 2015) argue that populism is driven by a strong discontent towards elites. When COVID-19 hit the world, and Brazil, The WHO entered the stage and came with measures, recommendations, and guidelines. Being an international health organization, The WHO as an elite brought out a large discontent in Bolsonaro. On multiple occasions Bolsonaro and his government explicitly or implicitly acted against the recommendations from the WHO: showing discontent. McKee et al. (2020) argue that a central feature to Mechanism (2) “contempt for institutions” is a populist’s contemptuous attitude towards public health institutions. Throughout the pandemic during 2020 Bolsonaro have worked against both explicitly and implicitly: the ministry of health. Bolsonaro was clearly heavily influenced by contempt for institutions.

The elite vs. the people notion has a strong basis in the literature on the school of thought I have focused on. As my theoretical foundation is based on the ideational approach, the feature of populists painting people vs. elites is central. Key in understanding populism is also the strong personification of the leader – the high-profile, passionate character presenting a strong enterprise (Dean and Maignushca 2020, 13). Bolsonaro is no exception to this "rule". Throughout the pandemic in Brazil Bolsonaro had multiple outbursts preaching unambiguous messages, placing blame or calling institutions out on alleged misconduct concerning COVID-19. Those who criticised Bolsonaro's ways were the ones he would passionately place blame on. McKee et al. (2020) argue that contempt for media is largely characterising Mechanism (4) "suspicion of elites". The Brazilian media were one such element who Bolsonaro, in different ways, making it difficult for during the pandemic. Bolsonaro's contempt for the media may also be characterised as a form of contempt for elites. This shows how Bolsonaro also falls under the category of suspicion of elites. Furthermore, based on McKee et al. (2020) stating that populists who place blame for misfortune on an identifiably different group are blaming outsiders and victims, I argue that Bolsonaro, by blaming China and "faggots" proves himself blaming outsiders and victims.

In addition to that, the evidence tells us that populists are not necessarily taken by the gravity of a pandemic. We might have seen that in the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson behaviour; however, I have at least now seen that with Bolsonaro. I found several clear features of Bolsonaro's populism that he cultivated before the pandemic, also being present during the

pandemic, and that has had consequences for pandemic management. This corresponds with Diethelm and McKee's assumption of how populists in the face of crisis tend to cherry-pick their evidence and downplay the crisis (2009 2-3). Bolsonaro showed large signs of Mechanism (3) denialism, during his COVID-19 approach.

A report published on May 28th, 2021, by the University of São Paulo titled "A timeline of the federal strategy of dissemination of COVID-19",⁵⁵ reports that Bolsonaro and his government not only caused the somewhat unexpectedly high numbers of death and infected in Brazil, but also intentionally spread the virus (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 1). The purpose of the report was to "map and analyse the legal norms in repose to COVID-19 in Brazil" (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 5). The report supports the notion that populist politics have had an impact on how COVID-19 evolved in Brazil.

The conclusion of the report is unambiguous. "The results [of the survey] dispel the persistent interpretation that there would be incompetence and negligence on the part of the Federal Government in managing the pandemic" (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 19, my translation). In a different section of the study, the report states that: "On the contrary, the systematization of data reveals the commitment and efficiency in favour of the widespread dissemination of the virus in the national territory, with the declared objective of resuming economic activity as quickly as possible." (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 4, my translation). The study is based on assessing the Federal Government's actions. In one section, the study argued that the Federal Government had constantly encouraged the population to be exposed to the virus as well as encouraging the population to not comply with preventive sanitary measures (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 3). This, the study argued was based on denial of the seriousness of the disease. Furthermore, the study stated that the Federal Government implemented this encouragement under the excuse that people should be brave and show courage (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 3).

Assessing the report, I found that mechanisms (3) and (2), denialism and blaming outsiders and victims were visible in Bolsonaro's ways. Based on the report, I find populism to have "real world" consequences, being something more than a discourse or a strategy. The report shows how Bolsonaro's populism has largely characterised his COVID-19 response in Brazil. Given

⁵⁵ Universidade de São Paulo.

the evidence the report reveals, populism and crisis handling deserve to be taken with outmost seriousness. The report shows the impactful connection between populism and crisis handling. In Brazil we saw implications of the impact of populism on crisis handling. The Federal Government's battle with The Supreme Federal Court and the battle with governors and mayors were also brought up. I found that Bolsonaro's contempt for institutions and suspicion of elites, mechanisms (1) and (4) were observable in the report.

Regarding the Federal Government and mayors and governors, the study finds that the Federal Government had systematically obstructed mayors and governors in their quest to impose containment measures (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 4). The Federal Government's argument for hindering mayors and governors was the supposed opposition between protecting the health and protecting the economy. This, the study argues, resulted in the Federal Government spreading the idea that quarantine measures cause more damage than the virus (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 4). Populism impacts what information the public accesses and how in times of crisis. When the Federal Government's approach became criticised, they attacked whoever arguing against them: "attacks on critics of the federal response, the press and professional journalism, mainly questioning the dimension of the disease in the country." (Universidade de São Paulo 2021, 4, my translation).

I have now shown what the Brazilian government has (failed to do) done battling the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the policy response to COVID-19 in Brazil has been initiated by subnational levels of government (Petherick et al. 2020, 10). This bakes the question; what have the Brazilian government done? By analysing the Brazilian case we collect some experience. Among other things, we can at least exclude that a populist would rise to the occasion if a serious enough situation, like a crisis, emerged, because that has at least not been the case in Brazil. In addition to that, I also wish to draw attention to how populism not only manifest itself in ordinary populist politics day-to-day or elections, or when mobilizing, but how we see populist features to a much larger extent in a more widespread way. Crises are also influenced by populism when a populist is steering the course of a country like we have seen in Brazil during COVID-19.

As we have seen, this analysis shows that populism has indeed affected the COVID-19 crisis handling through; a mechanism (1) blaming outsiders and victims, mechanism (2) contempt for Institutions, mechanism (3) denialism and finally mechanism (4) suspicion of elites. The four

mechanisms were present in Bolsonaro's handling of the pandemic, blaming people for not being brave enough to face the virus, constantly fighting with the Supreme Federal Court and the Ministry of Health, denying the seriousness of the virus by actively promote spread to resume to economic activities as soon as possible, denying the importance of containment measures and spreading suspicion of media by characterising their information as corrupt and wrongful. Although I am not able to comment on to what extent the mechanisms have caused the deadly outcome of the pandemic, we do have a better understanding of which role populism has played in crisis management. I have performed a study that supports the expectation that denying science and letting populism run politics is bad for business in various ways and here we see it negatively affecting crisis management.

When assessing populist Bolsonaro's response to COVID-19 I analysed 2020 by means of limiting the study. Nevertheless, it has become clear that the evident tendencies of Bolsonaro's populism and how they have affected the Brazilian COVID-19 course did not stop once the calendar showed "2021". Tens of thousands have protested in cities throughout Brazil against Bolsonaro's COVID-19 response during May 2021 (Phillips 2021). There were protests in over 200 Brazilian cities with slogans such as "This government is more dangerous than the virus". In June Bolsonaro lead a parade where hundreds participated by motorcycle in São Paulo, without wearing a mask, breaching local COVID-19 measures (Galf and Azevedo 2021). A public commission of inquiry investigating Bolsonaro's COVID-19 handling stated at the beginning of May 2021 that more than 90,000 lives could have been saved in Brazil had it not been for Bolsonaro's wrongful COVID-19 handling (Stefansen 2021). It is not unreasonable to think that populism has a large impact on how Brazil has been handling COVID-19.

4.5 Summarizing the chapter

By introducing, this chapter established the purpose of the analysis to come. I aimed at providing an analytical answer to the posed research question *“How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis? - Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?”*

The chapter has included a firstly presentation of the empiric COVID-19 situation in Brazil, the unfolding of the pandemic and the federal response to it. Secondly, the chapter have contained

a step-by-step analytic review of the policy responses to COVID-19 and the earlier presented four mechanisms of populism, reviewing the mechanisms in light of evidence of the Brazilian case.

From evidence of COVID-19 in Brazil in terms of cases of infected and numbers of deaths we learned how Brazil had high numbers of infected and deaths. The numbers of dead and infected was present despite Brazil's institutional and financial capacity to handle the pandemic. As Brazil rank higher than its neighbouring countries on the continent, on measures such spending on research and development, bureaucracy with highest quality and social spending per capita it was noted that Brazil still did not show lower numbers of infected or dead by COVID-19. Despite what we might had been anticipating, regardless of Brazils expenditure on health, research, and social spending matches OECD levels.

Nevertheless, Brazils COVID-19 deaths and infections show numbers similar or even worse than its Latin American neighbours. The descriptive account was followed by the analysis of Folha De São Paulo's coverage of "Bolsonaro coronavirus". The analysis showed a clear overweight of articles written containing "Bolsonaro coronavirus" in March reaching 1242 articles. The following months display a continuous high number of publications before decreasing in numbers and flattens around 300-350 publications a month through the last part of 2020. This tendency is similar to the number of deaths and infected by COVID-19 in Brazil

So, what kind of populism has Bolsonaro stood for?

My analysis showed how Bolsonaro sat at the very key position in handling the pandemic; denied, showed contempt for institutions, suspicion of elites and blamed outsiders and victims for COVID-19. The development over time showed how the main emphasis was evident in the beginning of the pandemic, during the months of March, April, May, and June. After that, Bolsonaro was a bit less aggressive in his populism, with not as many conflicts and “scandals” within the categories of the four mechanisms, as he did during the early phase of the pandemic.

I analysed the four mechanisms: blaming outsiders and victims, contempt for institutions, denialism, and suspicion of elites, to populism and found that they affected to different extents and at different times with different intensity. While I found Bolsonaro to be “completely” populist throughout the period of 2020 which I analysed, I did see him showing many signs of denialism and contempt for institutions more so than any other feature to his populism.

Bolsonaro constantly fought the Supreme Federal Court not only in the halls of power but also to his supporters on social media or during physical demonstrations calling for closure of the Supreme Federal Court (and for a military intervention).

Bolsonaro's denialism was very intense in his pandemic handling. He cherry picked evidence by ignoring reports on effectiveness of measures and kept promoting and praising hydroxychloroquine despite a larger and larger amount of evidence advising against the remedy. Characterizing Bolsonaro's populism more than anything is his constant denial and cherry picking of evidence, as well as his large contempt for institutions (and to some extent, elites). In addition to that, I found Bolsonaro's populism with all the four mechanisms to be most intense during the first half of the pandemic, before he became a bit more silent yet absolutely continued to practice his populist approach to the COVID-19 handling.

I argue that mechanism (1) blaming outsiders and victims, (2) contempt for institutions and mechanism (3) denialism and mechanism (4) suspicion of elites has distinguishes Bolsonaro's populism in a COVID-19 context. The mechanism is somewhat overlapping in the Folha coverage, and several Folha publications containing one mechanism, indeed contained several of the other mechanisms.

5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS

5.1 Studying a populist president's COVID-19 handling

Through a qualitative study of the newspaper Folha de São Paulo I attempted to answer my research question: **How have populist governments responded to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?** Related to my case being Brazil, I had formulated a more specific sub question: *Which features characterise Bolsonaro's populism and how do these features become evident during a pandemic?*

Studying how populism have influenced COVID-19 crisis management during COVID-19 had me face some restrictions affecting this study. Not being able to travel to Brazil and conduct interviews, was probably the largest and most defining limitation I had to acknowledge. As mentioned in the literature review, four mechanisms of populism are predicted to play a part in crisis management under populism during COVID-19. My analysis pursued this paved path, bringing the four mechanisms one step further and analyzing the president's COVID-19 response in Brazil, and to which extent these mechanisms were present in the response. My data foundations have been the Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo, a well-reviewed and trustworthy source of information. My analysis mainly focused on Folha publications, qualitatively assessing 6325 relevant Folha publications. In addition to that, I have reviewed a report issued by the Universidade de São Paulo (2021) which listed all Federal Government policy responses to COVID-19. This information has been structured in my chapter dedicated to analyzing, which also included an empirical outlook on the Brazilian COVID-19 performance in deaths and infected.

"When the history of the COVID-19 pandemic is written, it will be possible to identify many individual decisions by politicians that influenced its course" (McKee et al. 2020, 2). This study presented four central mechanisms to populism accounting for their foundation in the scientific literature on populism. During this entire study, my focus has been on the research question, which leads me to find that these central mechanisms are related to politics and populism, and especially crisis management and populism as we saw was present in Brazil.

This study set out with the aim of assessing a "how question", therefore the focus has been on how populism, characterized by blaming victims and outsiders, contempt for institutions,

denialism, and suspicion of elites, have been present in the handling of the pandemic.

With respect to the research question, the current study found that the Brazilian President when faced with COVID-19 practised an attitude towards the pandemic which was characterized by denialism, blaming outsiders and victims, suspicion of elites and contempt for institutions. Now, the scope of this study does not allow for implications on whether or not Bolsonaro's attitude as it has been, has had an affected on the high numbers of deaths and infected in Brazil. However, what I can say for sure is that Bolsonaro's attitude, which is characterized by denialism, blaming outsiders and victims, suspicion of elites and contempt for institutions, have indeed affected Brazilian politics during 2020. Furthermore, the report from the Universidade de São Paulo (2021) did establish that the Bolsonaro government had neglected to handle the pandemic to such a large extent that lives could have been saved had it not been for their wrongful handling. The Report even went as far as stating that the government had spread the virus on purpose.

5.2 How populism has affected crisis management

During this study I have gained knowledge on how populism affects crisis management and that a populist is still populist even when there is a gigantic crisis no one has seen the size of before. I consider this to be a contribution to the field. In this following section I will show how. My findings are important for several reasons. First, it addresses a gap in the literature both theoretically and empirically on populism and crisis handling. My findings showed how a populist (in my case: Bolsonaro) did not suddenly change and become anti-populist. Based on my findings, there are good reason to believe that the populists' actions (being characterized by blaming victims and outsiders, contempt for institutions, denialism and suspicion of elites) has affected the crisis management. The literature presented the notion that Brazil would be believed to cope with COVID-19 in a relatively good way, given its robustness in terms of being an advanced state compared to its Latin American neighbors. However, the implications of this study found that there has been denialism, attacks on elites, contempt for institutions, and wrongful blaming of victims and outsiders. It is not unthinkable that the reason why Brazil is showing such bad statistical performance in terms of infected and deaths by COVID-19 is precisely that it has a populist president and that the way he has ruled has affected the crisis management.

There are discussions (Weyland 2021) about whether populism is a strategy (superficial strategy) aiming at attracting votes in order to gain political power, or if populism is something more profound. I chose to adopt the ideational approach to populism in this study, as this approach allows for an emphasis on the rhetorical “pure people” vs. “corrupt elite” which has been fitting to my case. I found Bolsonaro to appeal rhetorically to the masses in a directly personalistic way. Yet, my findings may be said to give some indications pointing to that populism is something more profound. Because, for Bolsonaro populism has not just been a strategy to win votes, that is if populism is a strategy just to win votes, then Bolsonaro has chosen an unsuccessful approach to vote-winning. As made account for in my theory chapter, Freedon (2017) is one of the critics of the Ideational approach to populism. Freedon argues that populism is not a “ideational insubstantial fingerprint”, which Freedon states that Mudde portrays populism as. I agree with Freedon’s critique. I argue that Bolsonaro’s populism is deeper and more pervasive, as we observed how Bolsonaro did not become serious and in such a situation as Brazil facing COVID-19, one could imagine that it would have made sense for him to save lives. In this sense, populism becomes very evident and appears as a strong characteristic.

Therefore, I find that it is reasonable to think that what we saw in Brazil may be an indication that populism in the case of Bolsonaro was not a pure election strategy. Populism is not just rhetoric, populism has direct political consequences; populism is something deeply rooted and characterizing his entire political approach. These findings may be one of the contributions provided by this study.

5.3 The road ahead for research on populism and crisis handling

Despite these promising results, questions on populism and crisis handling remain.

The findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of populism in crisis handling. We cannot generalize my findings to any great extent, but what we have learned in general about populism and crisis management have shed light on some knowledge in a large room of unanswered questions waiting to be studied.

My study does not directly answer what populism is, but to the extent that I can say something about it, I will at least say that there is little in my study support the point of view that populism

is a strategy. My case showed how populism lasted throughout the crisis handling and can be believed to have had an effect on the crisis handling as I did find populism to have an effect on the politics implemented during the crisis. A study with focus on populism during COVID-19 in one of the other large countries ran by a populist during COVID-19, would provide interesting insight, comparing results and findings with this study. Future studies on the current topic are highly recommended.

Furthermore, one of the strongest impressions I am left with after analyzing the case and gaining knowledge on these specific conditions, is how I observed that Bolsonaro overall seemed to have prioritized the economy above all. This is supported in the Universidade de São Paulo (2021) report. Now my theoretical framework did say that Bolsonaro as a populist could be believed to show suspicion of elites (mechanism 4.). Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017, 13) state that populists would show suspicion towards those holding economic power. This differs from the findings presented here. From what I gather after analyzing Bolsonaro's crisis management, he has not showed much suspicion towards the financial elites – he has flirted with the financial sector with constant reassurances that the economy is the most important, promising to open stores and “keep Brazil going” - during the campaign “Brazil cannot stop”. In the early days of the pandemic a large dilemma arose for any government; “closing down the economy, letting it scream before being able to re-open later when spread is low or gone, OR, keeping the economy open while probably causing more virus spread letting people scream but the economy survive?” In my case, Bolsonaro preached about herd immunity yet also relying on very little scientific grounding, acting as a typical populist. Bolsonaro focused on the economy at the expense of human life.

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7.0 APPENDIX

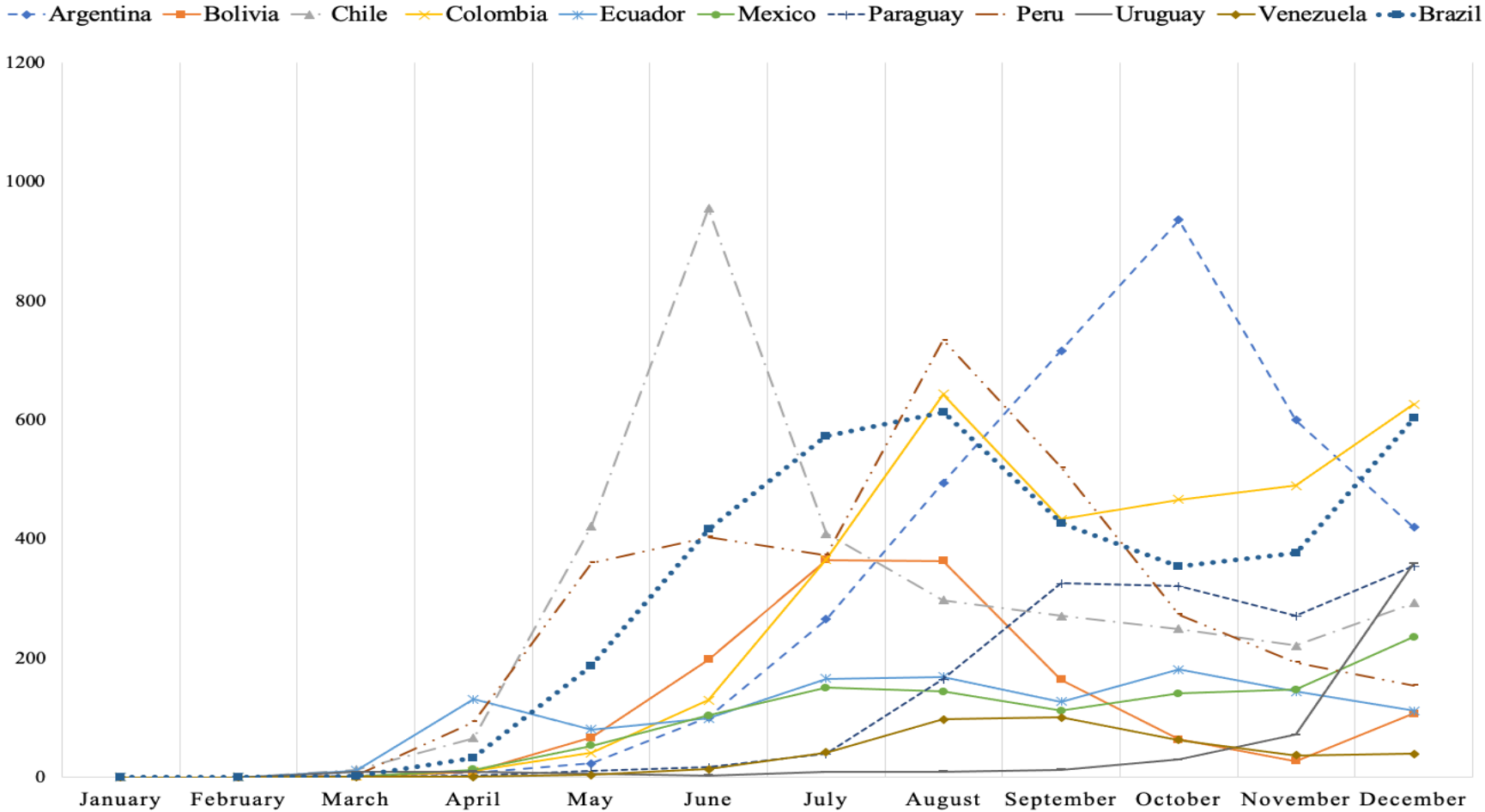
Attachment 1.: Table displaying new cases of infected persons per month per country in 2020 (not accumulated) per 100,000.

Data in figure collected from the WHO dataset: “Daily cases and deaths by date reported to WHO” (World Health Organization 2020f).

<i>Month</i>	Argentina	Bolivia	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador	Mexico	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela	Brazil	⁵⁶ Average
<i>January</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>February</i>	0	0	0	0	0.288	0.047	0	0	0	0	0.023691121	0.08370574
<i>March</i>	18.2470747	8.43	129.22092	13.945328	112.6	7.7366	9.084921	26.20695807	89.3	4.5238	20.14219127	53.5409762
<i>April</i>	75.2358045	83	656.18266	104.232387	1307	123.53	24.84158	933.1768708	91.3	7.0136	320.4461057	382.287039
<i>May</i>	233.673819	667	4219.7568	411.983129	799.8	532.04	102.9151	3601.764971	55.2	36.506	1863.448831	355.8875
<i>June</i>	1006.50419	1980	9557.8629	1292.84315	983.9	1036.4	165.0901	4033.595352	32.6	137.71	4164.790132	547.67592
<i>July</i>	2649.453	3649	4091.2218	3660.86711	1652	1501.8	388.8062	3730.000661	89	415.98	5724.352952	914.749495
<i>August</i>	4945.46906	3632	2977.938	6433.50423	1685	1436.5	1647.778	7343.854053	96.2	974.44	6130.731492	1048.08412
<i>September</i>	7164.93642	1639	2708.2045	4336.34145	1272	1113.1	3258.932	5206.910393	127	1002.3	4261.137184	878.65699
<i>October</i>	9360.92736	631	2494.2434	4666.69872	1807	1403.8	3210.668	2733.89018	299	622.53	3548.512996	1033.06793
<i>November</i>	5998.72582	270	2208.6804	4896.57811	1437	1472.6	2708.584	1930.886838	713	367.52	3771.133724	997.507818
<i>December</i>	4201.01067	1068	2929.4999	6261.67077	1116	2358.2	3549.507	1541.904218	3597	389.29	6033.081429	1865.14342

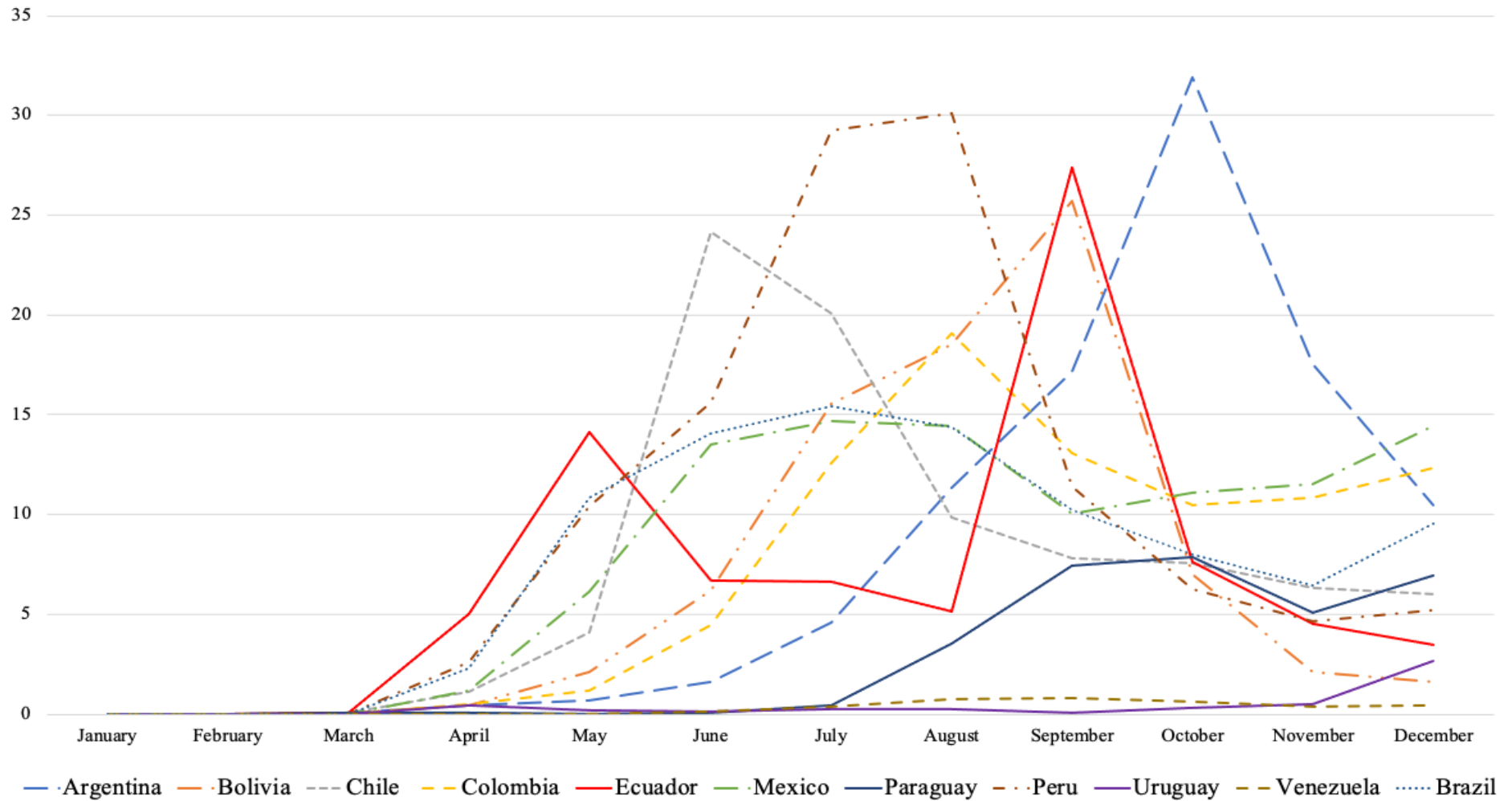
⁵⁶ Average value for the following countries: Mexico, Ecuador, Uruguay, Venezuela.

Attachment 2.: New Cases of COVID-19 per month (not accumulated) including all countries, adjusted per 100,000. The values of the chart can be seen as numeric values in the attachment 1.



Data in figure collected from the WHO dataset: “Daily cases and deaths by date reported to WHO” (World Health Organization 2020f).

Attachment 3.: New COVID-19 deaths per month per country per 100,000. Not accumulated.



Data in figure collected from the WHO dataset: “Daily cases and deaths by date reported to WHO” (World Health Organization 2020f).

Attachment 4: Table displaying COVID-19 deaths per month per country in 2020 (not accumulated) per 100,000.

Month	Argentina	Bolivia	Chile	Colombia	Ecuador	Mexico	Paraguay	Peru	Uruguay	Venezuela	Brazil	⁵⁷ Average
January	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
February	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
March	0.4450506	0.43	0.4221181	0.1986514	0.46	0.1568	0.425856	0.338352745	0	0.1052	6.44398E-06	0.17702014
April	4.16122314	4.34	10.975072	5.14507114	50.36	12.142	0.851711	25.93012401	4.33	0.2455	23.12727254	1.81009421
May	6.74251664	21.3	41.209284	11.6012415	141.1	61.501	0.283904	103.8435334	2.02	0.1403	108.3205445	0.81542903
June	16.3556097	62	241.55711	44.7561594	67.23	135.08	0.425856	156.4727649	1.44	1.052	140.933742	0.97408915
July	45.9737273	156	200.61165	126.103906	66.48	146.68	4.400509	292.182975	2.31	3.8575	154.0491467	3.5229995
August	113.265379	185	98.511822	190.903991	51.69	144.68	35.20407	301.1647024	2.6	7.7501	143.7008649	15.1846692
September	171.611513	257	78.144622	130.653023	273.8	100.21	74.38279	114.3324685	0.87	8.3813	102.3266908	27.8769072
October	318.856505	69.9	75.611913	104.987262	75.98	111.07	78.7833	62.68753585	2.89	6.1369	80.12811021	29.2696577
November	175.349938	21.2	63.212192	108.761639	45.53	115.12	50.81878	46.66191948	5.2	3.612	64.40194394	19.8768399
December	104.497882	16.2	60.31013	123.541303	34.54	144.12	69.41448	52.13708208	26.9	4.5238	95.33307181	33.6011533

Data in figure collected from the WHO dataset: “Daily cases and deaths by date reported to WHO” (World Health Organization 2020f).

⁵⁷ An average of Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Attachment 5: Table displaying population in numbers as of 2019 (The World Bank 2019).

<i>Country</i>	<i>Population size</i>
Argentina	44,938,710
Bolivia	11,513,100
Chile	18,952,040
Colombia	50,339,440
Ecuador	17,373,660
Mexico	127,575,530
Paraguay	7,044,640
Peru	32,510,450
Uruguay	3,461,730
Venezuela	28,515,830
Brazil	211,049,530

Attachment 6: References for the tendencies presented in table 4.4. The references present a selection of key sources.

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>SOURCES</u>
<i>January 2020</i>	(Fernandes and Moreira 2020), (Leite 2020), (Fernandes 2020).
<i>February 2020</i>	(Coletta 2020a), (Uribe et al. 2020), (Cunha 2020), (Pupo, Resende and Bragon 2020), (Cancian 2020a), (Coletta and Fernandes 2020).
<i>March 2020</i>	(Moura and Narcizo 2020), (Coletta 2020b), (Mattoso 2020a), (Coletta 2020c), (Mattoso 2020b), (Mattoso 2020c), (Rodrigues 2020), (Coletta 2020d) (Mattoso 2020d), (Gielow 2020a), (Folha De São Paulo 2020a), (Brant et al. 2020), (Arcanjo, Zanini and Linhares 2020a), (Coletta, Uribe and Mello 2020). (Gielow 2020b),

<i>April 2020</i>	(Cancian 2020b), (Cancian and Fernandes 2020), (Coletta and Carvalho 2020), (De Sá 2020), (Mattoso 2020e), (Alencastro 2020), (Folha de São Paulo 2020b), (Fernandes and Fabrini 2020), (Saldaña and Machado 2020a), (Saldaña and Machado 2020b), (Bergamo 2020a).
<i>May 2020</i>	(Coletta and Moraes 2020), (Folha de São Paulo 2020c), (Machado 2020a), (Resende 2020), (Watanabe 2020), (Bergamo 2020b), (Mena 2020a), (Cancian, Saldaña and Chaib 2020), (Fernandes and Pupo 2020), (Righetti and Gamba 2020), (Fernandes 2020b), (Linhares 2020), (Brant 2020), (Folha de São Paulo 2020d), (Carvalho 2020a), (Coletta and Chaib 2020), (Pinto 2020).
<i>June 2020</i>	(Folha de São Paulo 2020e), (Uribe 2020a), (Mattoso 2020f), (Boghossian 2020), (Tavares 2020), (Collucci 2020), (Teixeira 2020a), (Caram 2020a), (Mena 2020b), (Carvalho 2020b), (Saldaña and Garcia 2020), (Grady 2020).
<i>July 2020</i>	(Teixeira 2020b), (Folha De São Paulo 2020f), (Sperb 2020), (Carvalho 2020c), (Carvalho 2020d), (Folha De São Paulo 2020g), (Uribe 2020b), (Mattoso 2020g), (Coletta 2020e), (Mattoso 2020h), (Coletta 2020f), (Bergamo 2020c), (Rocha and Teixeira 2020), (Coletta 2020g).
<i>August 2020</i>	(Folha De São Paulo 2020h), (Folha De São Paulo 2020i), (Coletta 2020h), (Pupo 2020), (Cancian and Coletta 2020), (Folha De São Paulo 2020j), (Caram 2020b), (Lemos, Marcedo and Resende 2020).
<i>September 2020</i>	(Bergamo 2020d), (Folha De São Paulo 2020k), (Marchewicz 2020), (Folha De São Paulo 2020l), (Amparo 2020), (Watanabe and Coelho 2020), (Uribe and Pupo 2020),
<i>October 2020</i>	(Folha De São Paulo 2020m), (Folha De São Paulo 2020n), (Freire 2020), (Carvalho 2020e), (Machado 2020b), (Carvalho 2020f), (Lemos 2020), (Teixeira 2020c), (Carvalho 2020g).
<i>November 2020</i>	(Chaib 2020a), (Chaib 2020b), (Sassine 2020), (Folha De São Paulo 2020o), (Coletta 2020i), (Coletta 2020j).

<i>December 2020</i>	(Folha De São Paulo 2020p), (Valadares 2020), (Carvalho 2020h), (Batista 2020), (Folha De São Paulo 2020q), (Richmond 2020), (Folha De São Paulo 2020r), (Amâncio 2020).
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Attachment 7: Table showing which categories the different numbers represent. These are the numbers and categories coded in the timeline, and all subjects presented in table 4.4 have been categorized to belong to one of these 15 categorical groups.

1. China and Brazilians in Wuhan.
2. Financial downsides of COVID-19
3. Bolsonaro clashing with Institutions
4. Bolsonaro underestimating the virus.
5. Bolsonaro and agglomerations
6. COVID-19 financial emergency aid.
7. Chloroquine and COVID-19.
8. Brazil`s COVID-19 death records.
9. Challenging unemployment
10. Resignation or impeachment of Bolsonaro
11. Social media deleting Bolsonaro's content
12. Bolsonaro tries to escape/blame the press.
13. Bolsonaro and the COVID-19vaccine
14. The upcoming U.S. Election
15. Bolsonaro saying masks don't work

Attachment 8.: Table showing the different monthly subjects, (identical to table 4.4) and how they have been coded for the sake of the timeline figure 4.3.

<i>January 2020</i>	(1) The coverage is mainly focused on China and Brazilians in Wuhan. (1) The virus spreading within China.
<i>February 2020</i>	(1) The subject of the Brazilians in China, their return and quarantine rules. (2) The different financial aspects such as how the virus will affect/do affect currencies and cause recession.
<i>March 2020</i>	(2) How the virus is affecting the world economy and currencies, weak USD, and Brazilian investment sinking. (2) Fall in oil prices and in the Brazilian stock market. (3) Bolsonaro and Governors/Congress arguing on coronavirus handling. (4) Bolsonaro underestimating the virus. (5) Bolsonaro meeting Pro-Government protesters without a mask, while shaking hands with supporters which raises criticism from Congress.
<i>April 2020</i>	(6) The discussion on emergency aid for people affected by COVID-19. (7) Chloroquine as medicine, and the distribution and debate about effects. (3) Henrique Mandetta (the minister of health) and his approach to the virus. (3) Mandetta gets fired due to disagreeing with Bolsonaro on virus handling (8) Brazil breaking the death record. (4) Bolsonaro wanting to re-open schools and industries
<i>May 2020</i>	(5) The labour law, Bolsonaro causing agglomeration. (7) A debate on the use of Chloroquine to treat Covid-19 (3) Bolsonaro in conflict with the Supreme Court. (8) Brazil's Covid-19 death record. (9) Unemployment rising (6) Emergency aid. (10) The possible resignation or impeachment of president Bolsonaro. (11) Social media removing content due to classifying fake news posts about coronavirus shared by Bolsonaro. (3) Bolsonaro appoint a new Minister of Health who resign after almost a month.
<i>June 2020</i>	(6) Emergency aid. (12) Bolsonaro avoiding the press. (8) Records in deaths and infected. (7) The controversy with the use of Hydroxychloroquine. (5) Protests, both pro and against Bolsonaro. (9) Unemployment. (4) Bolsonaro encouraging people to enter hospitals and film free beds in order to show that the capacity.
	(7) The debate about the use of Hydroxychloroquine which Bolsonaro promote.

<i>July 2020</i>	<p>(8) The contamination of ministers. New records in deaths and infected.</p> <p>(13) A possible vaccine (mostly the Chinese one).</p> <p>(4) The absence of protection for the indigenous communities facing the virus.</p> <p>(4) Bolsonaro and his wife catches the virus.</p> <p>(9) The rising unemployment.</p>
<i>August 2020</i>	<p>(4) The disagreement on protecting indigenous communities against covid-19.</p> <p>(8) Brazil reaching 100,000 covid-19 deaths.</p> <p>(7) Hydroxychloroquine.</p> <p>(12) Bolsonaro criticising the media.</p> <p>(3) Bolsonaro and the Congress/The supreme court argue.</p> <p>(6) Emergency aid.</p>
<i>September 2020</i>	<p>(6) Increasing emergency aid.</p> <p>(13) Bolsonaro being ambiguous about whether vaccine be mandatory or not.</p> <p>(4) Bolsonaro downplaying the pandemic in Brazil.</p>
<i>October 2020</i>	<p>(14) The upcoming U.S. election.</p> <p>(7) The use of Hydroxychloroquine.</p> <p>(13) Using the Chinese vaccine and Bolsonaro saying it won't be mandatory.</p> <p>(3) Arguing with Congress on protecting the indigenous community.</p>
<i>November 2020</i>	<p>(15) Bolsonaro say masks don't work.</p> <p>(6) Emergency aid and spending of pandemic funds.</p> <p>(7) Bolsonaro defend the use of Hydroxychloroquine.</p>
<i>December 2020</i>	<p>(7) Bolsonaro defend the use of Hydroxychloroquine.</p> <p>(5) Bolsonaro causing agglomeration.</p> <p>(13) The start of the vaccination.</p> <p>(3) Bolsonaro and Doria (the governor of São Paulo clashes over vaccine)</p>

