This paper borrows the term ‘action repertoire’ from social movement analysis and applies it to contemporary populism and neo-nationalism in Europe. The concept has the advantage of highlighting the open-ended and shifting nature of populism. Repertoires shift and are open to innovation. The paper examines the pioneering phase in which small or peripheral countries had a disproportionate influence, and shows how the repertoire developed there is adopted and adapted in the course of – and after – the EU referendum in the UK. I take two examples from two distinct phases of the emergence of right-wing populist repertoires: Phase One (1980s/90s): the populist-neo-nationalist right in Austria; Phase Two (current): the UK and Brexit. The paper argues that populism and neo-nationalism have become increasingly mainstream; common property across the political spectrum. The broader context here is one in which nation states narrow their raison d’être and the source of their legitimacy as they increasingly focus upon a single task: the defence of borders, above all against migrants.

ALAN SCOTT is Professor of Sociology at the University of New England (NSW) and an Adjunct at the University of Innsbruck (Austria). He is currently on sabbatical and a visiting researcher at ISA. His research interests lie in political and organizational sociology, and in social theory. Recent publications include (as co-author with Antonino Palumbo) Remaking Market Society (Routledge, 2018) and ‘Plebiscitary) leader democracy: The return of an illusion?’ Thesis Eleven 148: 3-20, 2018.