Electronic Newsletter of the ECPR-SG on Extremism & Democracy

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Standing Group Announcements

ECPR General Conference in Glasgow and SG meeting

We were glad to see many of you at the ECPR General Conference in Glasgow (3-6 September), and hope that you enjoyed the SG-endorsed section 'Political radicalism in times of crisis' in particular.

During the conference, the Standing Group also held its annual members meeting. We used the meeting to discuss the adoption of a new constitution, following the establishment of a new SG framework by the ECPR. There was a consensus among the members that the Default Constitution, outlined in the Appendix of the framework, could be adopted more or less as it stands. The Framework and the Default Constitution can be found at: http://www.ecpr.eu/StandingGroups/StandingGroupFramework.aspx

We were further happy to hear positive feedback on the new SG Facebook Page, and understood that many of you find this a useful resource for up-to-date news and events. We were also glad to receive ideas and suggestions concerning the organisation of future events, and the contents of the new website, which is currently under construction.

New Book Review Editor

We would like to welcome Anders Ravik Jupskås as the new e-Extreme book review editor. We are extremely grateful to our outgoing editor, Janet Dack, for her previous contributions to the activities of the E&D team.

Keep us informed!

Please keep us informed of any upcoming conferences or workshops you are organizing, and of any publication or funding opportunities that would be of interest to Standing Group members. We will post all details on our website. Similarly, if you would like to write a report on a conference or workshop that you have organized and have this included in our newsletter, please do let us know.

Please also tell us of any *recent* publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in the 'publications alert' section of our newsletter, and please get in touch if you would like to see a particular book (including your own) reviewed in e-Extreme, or if you would like to review a specific book yourself.

Finally, if you would like to get involved in the production of the newsletter, the development of our website, or any of the other activities of the Standing Group then please do contact us. We are always very keen to involve more members in the running of the Standing Group! Email us at: info@extremism-and-democracy.com.

Conference Reports

Analyzing Populist Discourse: Methods / Tools / Interpretations
Thessaloniki, Greece
11-13 July, 2014
Organizers: POPULISMUS team (Yannis Stavrakakis, Alexandros Kioupkiolis, Nikos Nikisianis,
Giorgos Katsambekis, Thomas Siomos, Ioanna Garefi)

Giorgos Katsambekis
Organising member

Within the framework of its activities, the POPULISMUS research project – an initiative implemented within the framework of the Operational Program 'Education and Lifelong Learning' (Action 'ARISTEIA II') and co- financed by the European Union (European Social Fund) and national funds – has organized a three-day international methodological workshop aiming at an in-depth exploration of theoretical, methodological and analytical issues related to the analysis of populist discourse. The workshop took place at the Aristotle University Research Dissemination Centre from the 11th to the 13th of July 2014 with the participation of international and Greek scholars specializing in the area of the project and its methodology.

In support of the aims of the workshop, the POPULISMUS research team drafted an internal technical report (available in PDF format at the project's webpage) designed to chart the research trajectory to be followed in the project, to highlight the main research questions to be explored and to put forward some guiding threads. This report offered a starting point for debate in the international workshop, facilitating the exchange of good research practices and generating important feedback for its following stages.

Yannis Stavrakakis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, PI of the POPULISMUS project) opened the workshop with the first orientation session, where he laid out the aims, methods and scope of the POPULISMUS project in a detailed presentation.

The first panel focused on linguistic and corpora-based methods of discourse analysis that could contribute in the empirical study of populist discourse and included papers by Periklis Politis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), Titika Dimitroulia and Dionysis Goutsos (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and University of Athens) and Eliza Kitis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), while the second panel focused on Foucauldian and other post-structuralist methods of discourse analysis, featuring papers by Yannis Karagiannis (University of Crete), Yannis Pechtelidis (University of Thessaly) and Yvonne Kosma (American College of Thessaloniki).

This first day of the workshop was concluded with the second orientation session where Jason Glynos (Essex University) presented his 'logics approach' as a method of critical analysis inspired by the post-structuralist tradition, that combines both theoretical innovation with the potential for empirical application.

The second day of the workshop kicked off with a keynote lecture by Chantal Mouffe (University of Westminster), where she advanced her arguments on 'the crisis of

representative democracy and the need for a 'left-wing populism'. Mouffe drew on her previous work on contemporary democratic systems in the Western world and on the elaboration of notions such as 'consensus', 'post-politics' and 'passions', to conclude that in today's post-democratic systems a form of democratic left-wing populist movement could be a crucial factor in re-invigorating democratic politics.

The third panel aimed at highlighting the empirical applicability of the 'Essex School' of discourse analysis and also of the Barthesian method in a variety of fields. Thomas Siomos (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) presented a paper on 'crisis discourse and media-populism', using as an example the case of contemporary Greece. Antonis Galanopoulos (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) drew on the 'Essex School' to analyze the discourse of the Democratic Left, a small moderate party of the centre-left in Greece. Athena Avgitidou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) advanced an approach to hegemonic financial discourses using the work of Roland Barthes. Iraklis Mavridis (Panteion University) concluded the panel by offering some general critical reflections on the relation between discourse analysis and the critique of ideology.

The third panel was followed by another orientation session where Gerasimos Vokos (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) talked on the 'emergence of the people', starting from revolutionary France to move on to the early 19th century and the problems posed to the ruling elites by this 'disturbing' emergence.

The fourth and the fifth panel delved into the various conceptions of collective subjectivity that range from 'the people' to the 'multitude' and from the 'masses' to the 'nation' and 'civil society'. Fani Giannousi (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) went back to 18th and 19th century discussions in order to locate the roots of today's stakes and ambiguities. Andreas Takis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) focused on Hardt and Negri's work to argue that the multitude 'stands as a non-represented and non-representable entity of our political ontology and finds its empirical expression in situations of structural political crisis.' Aris Stylianou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) followed Takis's presentation, starting also from Hardt and Negri's project to move on to Etienne Balibar's work on the 'masses'. Aggelos Gounopoulos (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) focused on the conceptualization of the subject of the 'poor people' in Liberation Theology in Latin America. Akritas Kaidatzis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) shifted the focus onto the notion of 'populist constitutionalism' to argue that 'the people not only act as the constituent power […] but they also shape, through the course of everyday politics, the way the constituted powers apply and interpret the constitution'. Alexandros Kioupkiolis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) highlighted the importance of the politics of hegemony, as understood by Laclau and Mouffe and the 'Essex School', in analysing democratic politics and collective action today. Fotini Tsibiridou and Michalis Bartsidis (University of Macedonia and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) reflected on a positive conception of populism, drawing on anthropological and philosophical approaches to unravel the significance of the 'popular' in Greece from the 1980s onwards. Yannis Skalidakis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) offered a historical twist to the discussion through an examination of the ways in which the National Liberation Front (EAM), during the occupation of Greece by the Axis powers, articulated in its discourse a vast social alliance through the interpellation of 'people's kratos' ('laokratia'; a term difficult to translate into English).

The last day of the workshop opened with an orientation session by Ryan Brading, who offered a comparison of Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian project in Venezuela with the anti-European and xenophobic UKIP in the United Kingdom.

The sixth panel followed on a comparative track, with case studies that ranged from the extreme right to the radical Left, and from religious discourse in contemporary Greece to anti-populism in post-1989 Bulgaria. Anastasia Iliadeli (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) reviewed various existing approaches on the extreme-right phenomenon in Europe to highlight the most important populist features that are embedded in this particular party family. Konstantinos Papastathis (University of Luxembourg) drew on Cas Mudde's 'pathological normalcy' thesis to critically explore the ideological relationship between the Greek Church and the neo-Nazi party, Golden Dawn. Giorgos Katsambekis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) brought the attention to the emergence of a populist radical left in Europe and highlighted the need for creative comparisons between left-wing and right-wing populisms. Finally, Georgi Medarov (University of Sofia) focused on the articulation of an 'anti-populist' discourse by Bulgaria's liberal elites in post-socialist Bulgaria'.

In the fourth orientation session Aurelien Mondon (University of Bath) talked on the 'irresistible rise' of the extreme right in Europe. Mondon argued that parties like the Front National or the UKIP, that showed a significant rise in recent elections, have benefited from a disproportionate coverage by mainstream media that often exaggerate their influence.
The last panel was dedicated to cleavage theories and quantitative methods of analysis, where Christoforos Verdardakis (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) and Theodoros Chadjipantelis and Tassos Varellas (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki) presented their techniques and arguments respectively and commented on their suitability for research on populism.

In the last orientation session Nikos Demertzis (University of Athens) tried to shed light on the affective dimension of populist identifications.

The workshop was concluded with an open discussion with the audience chaired by the PI of POPULISMUS, Yannis Stavrakakis, where a fruitful dialogue developed on the future prospects of the research programme and on the study of populism and democracy in general. Overall, the workshop, which was attended by one hundred participants, kicked off a set of POPULISMUS public events that will include a series of individual lectures as well as a major international conference towards May or June 2015.

Political Radicalism in Times of Crisis

Section at the 2014 ECPR General Conference in Glasgow
Organizers: Stijn van Kessel, Andrea Pirro and Elisabeth Carter
Glasgow, Scotland, UK
3-6 September, 2014

Stijn van Kessel & Andrea Pirro

The section at the ECPR General Conference in Glasgow sought to bring together research on current developments in radical politics. Themes included the electoral performance, nature and impact of the radical left and right in Europe and beyond, as well as the more general presence of radical discourse across party systems.

One theme which received attention in particular, was the ideological nature and developments of parties at the fringes of the political spectrum. The first panel, 'Beyond Class? The Radical Left and the Nation(al) Question' (chair: Luke March), focused on the

agenda of radical left parties beyond socio-economic issues. Papers focused on the role of national identity and related issues, such as immigration, in the parties' discourse and their supporters' opinions. The contributors highlighted the complexities of both the radical left family and of its voters regarding these issues. Later that day, the panel 'Rallying the Radicals' (chair: Matthijs Rooduijn) also reviewed common wisdom regarding the ideological nature of radical parties, by addressing the commonalities and differences between the radical left and radical right. Particular emphasis was placed on the motivations and opinions of these parties' supporters, which were still found to vary between the two party types, as well as the role of populism, which can be seen as a common element of radical parties on both sides of the supposed ideological divide. The last panel of the section, 'What's left of the radical right?' (chairs: Simon Otjes and Sarah L. de Lange), in turn, analysed developments in the socio-economic programmes of radical right-wing populist parties. The panel included several case studies, and presented a joint research programme aimed at clarifying the positions these parties take in debates about economic, financial and social issues.

The panel 'Euroscepticism Revisited', chaired by Simona Guerra and John FitzGibbon, touched on the current public opinion towards European integration across member states, as well as party-based Euroscepticism in Germany (embodied by the Alternative für Deutschland) and within the European Parliament. Before the first conference day came to an end, the panel 'The impact of radical parties' (chairs: Andrea Pirro and Stijn van Kessel) considered which effect the rise of populist and radical right parties had on the discourse and policies of mainstream parties. One contribution, in addition, focused on the possible responses of the mainstream parties to the populist challenge. The theme of populism was also central to the Friday morning panel 'The Study of Populism Through Experiments', which was chaired by Kirk Hawkins. The contributions used innovative experimental techniques to test the causes and consequences of populism at the individual level.

The workings of the section reasserted that political radicalism is a thriving field of research. Expanding on more traditional areas of study such as the radical right, immigration or West European parties, the section confirmed that there is still ample margin of substantive theoretical and methodological innovation in the field. Though certainly not self-conclusive, the section has contributed to refine our understanding of radical politics and provided elements for future academic discussion.

Book Review

Radical Left Parties in Europe
Luke March (New York: Routledge, 2011), 259 pp., ISBN 978-0-41542560-5.

Reviewed by Matthijs Rooduijn
University of Amsterdam

In the days directly after the elections to the European Parliament in May this year, a lot of attention was paid to the electoral successes of radical right parties such as Ukip in Britain and the Front National in France. Some analysts have even argued that these parties have caused an 'earthquake' in the European Parliament. Interestingly, relatively little heed was paid to the successes of radical parties on the other side of the political spectrum. Parties such as SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain also managed to gain large shares of the vote. SYRIZA went from 4.2 per cent of the vote in 2009 to 26.6 per cent in 2014. Podemos participated for the very first time and immediately got a vote share of 8.0 per cent.

In his book *Radical Left Parties in Europe* Luke March shows that over the last decades radical left parties have been electorally just as successful – and in many cases even more successful – than radical right and green parties. At the same time, the radical left party family has been very much understudied. March's book is a very successful attempt to turn the tide.

One of the main contributions of the book is that it focuses on the radical left party family in its entirety and from a pan-European perspective. As a result, the book is replete with interesting detailed accounts of various kinds of radical left parties. At the same time, it never loses sight of its more general comparative aspirations. One of the main arguments of the book is that the radical left now comprises a 'normal' party family whose members have many characteristics in common. In addition to their strongly left-wing policy positions when it comes to socioeconomic issues, most of them have increasingly incorporated post-materialist, feminist and ecologist stances. In fact, the most successful radical left parties turned out to be those that have managed to adapt their ideas to the changing political environments. Those parties that rigidly held on to a conservative Marxist-Leninist theoretical blueprint did much less well in the past two and a half decades.

Although March emphasizes that radical left parties have enough in common to categorize them within one single party family, he also acknowledges that there are important differences between the individual members of this party family. To assess these differences, he distinguishes four categories of radical left parties: (1) communist parties; (2) democratic socialist parties; (3) populist socialist parties; and (4) social populist parties. The communist parties are more traditional than the other parties. Some of them still embrace Marxism-Leninism (like the Communist Party of Greece, KKE), whereas others have discarded most elements of the Soviet model (like the French Communist Party, PCF). Democratic socialist parties are much less dogmatic. They are more modern and progressive, and emphasize more strongly topics such as feminism and participatory democracy (examples are many of the Scandinavian radical left parties). Populist socialist parties share this ideological profile, but add a strong anti-establishment discourse (e.g. Die Linke in Germany). The social populist parties constitute a more difficult category. They resemble classical populist movements with weak organizations and less coherent ideologies (like Sinn Féin in Ireland). Because it is not always clear whether the parties belonging to

this latter category can be conceived of as radical left at all, March does not focus on these parties in great detail.

He emphasizes that the categories are dynamic and overlapping. This is a good point. Parties change over time and many of them contain characteristics pertaining to more than one of the categories. For example, in the 1990s the Dutch Socialist Party (SP) fitted perfectly well within the populist socialist category. However, the party has become much less populist over the years and might now better be categorized as a democratic socialist party with some populist elements. On the other hand, where the SP has moderated its populism, many other radical left parties have become *increasingly* populist over the years.

This strong variability in populism raises the question of whether distinguishing separate categories of populist socialists and social populists is a good idea. Most contemporary radical left parties employ populist elements in their discourse. One might wonder whether a populist socialist party like the SP can still be distinguished from the, increasingly populist, democratic socialist parties. And because March has convincingly argued that the social populists (the fourth category) are not even 'real' radical left parties, I wonder whether it might be a good idea to drop the fourfold categorization of radical left parties and to distinguish only two general types: the conservative communists and the progressive socialists. Both types of radical left parties can employ a populist discourse to a lesser or larger extent.

A next step for researchers interested in the radical left might be to focus on the electorates of these parties. Who vote for them? Is there one reasonably coherent 'radical left electorate', or should we make a distinction between various left-leaning electorates? And why do citizens vote for (different kinds of) radical left parties? Anyone interested in such questions should first read Luke March's great book – the best comparative study of the radical left currently available.

Publications Alert

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Please tell us of any **recent** publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in the 'publications alert' section of our newsletter.

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