

The Sources of Populism in the Balkans

Marija Bistrica (Hotel Kaj), Croatia. 30.-31. October 2014

The Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Zagreb, invite abstract submissions for a two day workshop in Marija Bistrica (an hour north of Zagreb in Zagorje) to explore the diversity of sources for political populism in the Balkans.

The workshop rationale is to explore the socio-economic concerns of social groups usually associated with populism and extremism. Rather than assuming that these groups (e.g. 'transition losers', veterans, refugees, the poor and unemployed, etc.) are easily or automatically mobilized to join nationalist groups or support populist parties, the workshop seeks to illuminate the fears and grievances of these groups and how they can or do not respond to populist politics. The concept for the workshop begins with the premise that much social research on populism, both historical and contemporary, on the former Yugoslavia (and beyond) is excessively focused on elites and institutions, leaving the agency of individuals and groups and their representation unproblematised.

Following the assumption that the 'common sense' categories and claims made in the public sphere regarding these particular social groups may not have a strong empirical basis and can be at odds with what researchers actually encounter in the field, the workshop seeks to make a contribution to challenge the assumed link between these groups and their representatives (elected or self-appointed, political, activist or scholarly).

We are looking for contributions in the form of **contextualised case studies** which discuss the preconditions for populism, as well as the reasons why in certain circumstances members of vulnerable groups do or do not respond to populist ideas.

Topics of interest include (but are not limited to):

- definitions and theoretical debates on populism and populist politics/social movements
- populist discourses and discourse strategies 'from above': utilizing Nationalism, Fascism, Anti-Elitism, Religion, Gender, Anti-Semitism, Euro-scepticism, etc.
- positioning and reaction of social groups 'from below': 'transition losers', unemployed and/or working poor, veterans, refugees, ethnic minorities, LGBT, pensioners to populist politics
- global and European contextualization of Southeast European populism with North American and Western European populist movements

We invite abstracts (max. 400 words) and short CVs (max. 3 pages) to be submitted by April 30th 2014 to dario.brentin@uni-graz.at

Accepted participants will be notified in late May. Draft papers of 5,000-8,000 words need to be submitted by the 15th of October 2014. Accommodation will be covered by the organisers and limited travel grants will be made available (contingent on the timely submission of papers).



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