

**LEVERHULME LECTURES, QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
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'THE GLOBAL POPULIST CHALLENGE: BEYOND EURO-CENTRISM'

19 NOVEMBER 2014

DISCUSSANT: PROFESSOR ENGIN ISIN, OPEN UNIVERSITY

Against the background of traditional populist mobilizations (Agrarian populism in the US, Russian *Narodnichestvo* and traditional Latin American populisms in the 1940s and 1950s), 'populism' is dynamically and unexpectedly back on the agenda in a variety of contexts: Kirchnerismo and Chavismo in Latin America, extreme right-wing parties and movements in Europe, the 'Indignants' in Spain and Greece, 'Occupy Wall Street' as well as the Tea Party movement in the US have all been branded 'populist'. The diversity between these manifestations is such that most analyses of both traditional and contemporary forms of populist movements and populist discourse have largely focused on a single part of the globe in relative isolation (Latin America, the US or Europe). Hence, in recent years, within European debates, 'populism' is *directly* and often *exclusively* associated with the extreme right, with extremist and anti-European political forces that need to be marginalized. This view is shared by most mainstream media and dominates academic debate as well. And yet, such a restrictive association with the extreme-right seems to ignore the long historical trajectory of populist movements as well as the contemporary global picture of populist politics. As social scientists, we are, of course, entitled –indeed obliged– to deal with the phenomenon of the extreme right, especially given its pan-European manifestations. The question is how exactly to conceptually and politically deal with this problem; in particular, is the category of 'populism' the most suitable way? If, that is to say, what we are currently facing is the pan-European rise of a nationalist, xenophobic, exclusionist and, very often, violent extreme right, is the concept of 'populism' the proper theoretico-political instrument through which the problem should be perceived, categorized and debated? What are the implications (direct and indirect) of such a naming? And what are the risks for critical analysis and for democratic political strategy? In order to reflexively account for the global populist challenge we may first have to challenge dominant euro-centric approaches and reconsider our understanding of democratic political subjectivity in times of crisis. In this effort, insights emanating from the Essex School of discourse analysis can be of much help.

'POPULISM, ANTI-POPULISM AND CRISIS: POST-DEMOCRATIC EUROPE AND ITS DISCONTENTS'

3 DECEMBER 2014

DISCUSSANT: PROFESSOR CHANTAL MOUFFE, UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

In most analyses of populism, both journalistic and social-scientific, the meaning of the term is taken for granted and never problematized. Even when this is not the case, argumentation focuses on what 'populism' is often hypostatizing and essentializing a particular conceptual content associated with limited geographical and political contexts. In order to avoid such pitfalls it may be

necessary to shift our attention from the *nature* of populism to its *uses*: from what populism is to how references to 'populism' have been used diachronically and synchronically in social and political struggles. Such a shift will have to focus on the complex language games marking popular-democratic representation throughout history. It is also bound to reveal the inherent link between the people and populism: studying the second always involves examining the ways in which the first becomes articulated and debated, recognized and idealized, opposed and demonized. Furthermore, to the extent that representations of 'the people' invariably involve the staging of an opposition, to the extent that they are (1) triggered by social division, by the splitting of every political community into part and whole and the dialectics of inclusion/exclusion it enacts, and (2) result in the construction of two (political and intellectual) camps, one 'populist' and the other 'anti-populist', every study of populism proper must also be a study of *anti-populism*, researching the symbolic instability and the historical variability of this opposition. An inquiry into the manifestations of these language games in contemporary crisis-ridden Europe, where the opposition between populism and anti-populism increasingly emerges as the predominant discursive cleavage, may help us realize their function as symptoms of a deepening *malaise* associated with post-democratic, neoliberal Europe. If popular sovereignty and representation have been the victims of the oligarchic, technocratic transformation of liberal democracies in an age of advanced globalization, is populism symptomatic of the need for a new type of democratization?