“The rise of authoritarian populism and ‘modernised’ far right parties in Europe”

Call for contributions to edited volume “The Crisis and Future of Representative Democracy”

Background & objectives

Democracy is in jeopardy. The rise and rise of authoritarian populism as well as the accompanying polarisation of politics and sustained attacks on the fundamental norms and foundations of liberal democracy in Europe and elsewhere have made that clear. Yet these symptoms are also reflective of a much longer decline of institutions in contemporary liberal representative democracies. Low levels of electoral participation, low levels of trust in government and political institutions, erosion of mainstream parties and party membership, fragmentation of the political landscape, and the decline of established channels to represent and mediate societal interests (parties, unions) epitomise this long-term trend.

The rise of authoritarian populism and the ‘modernised’ far right parties in Europe

Authoritarian and nationalist populist parties differ in their histories, individual party structure, support and political success. Despite these differences, there are important similarities, with regard to their agendas, their political style and the reasons that have led to their rise.

Numerous factors have been suggested as explanations for their support: the decline of the ‘centre’, structural change and regional decline, the financial and economic crises of 2008/09 and their political response, the inequality and relative deprivation caused by neoliberalism. Simultaneously, nationalist right-wing parties have undergone a re-branding and ‘modernisation’ making them more palatable even to voters who might not have considered voting for them years ago. Importantly, the normalisation of exploitative and exclusionary racism in rhetoric and legislation of ‘mainstream’ parties supports the “normalcy” (Mudde) argument, i.e., that the populist radical right must be seen as a radical interpretation of mainstream values rather than a fringe phenomenon. Potential questions to be discussed may include (but are not limited to):

- In what ways do authoritarian populist parties pose a serious threat to the functioning and existence of liberal representative democracies as we know them?
- How do these parties shape the authoritarian nationalist transformation of liberal representative democracy?
- Does the normalcy of nationalist, racist and authoritarian agendas among political parties which are not considered part of the populist or far right constitute a hegemonic challenge to (neo)liberal democracy?
- What are the prospects for defeating right-wing populist parties and the agendas they radically represent within the framework of existing liberal representative democracy? What could be specific proposals for (institutional) reform or public policy in order to achieve this?
- What are realistic scenarios for the mid- to long-term defeat of authoritarian populism across Europe (and possibly elsewhere)?
We invite papers focusing on these and other questions linked to the rise (and defeat) of authoritarian populism in Europe. Original empirical research is welcome but not required, however the paper’s argument must be supported by empirical evidence from cross-national qualitative or quantitative (case) analysis.

**Requirements**

- Papers should be no longer than 9,000 words, excluding list of references, and written in (British) English.
- Contributions should be written with an informed, non-specialist audience in mind, targeting specifically practitioners, activists, stakeholders, politicians and other political actors on the left/progressive spectrum.
- Contributions must adhere to referencing standards and the RLS style guide, which will be shared with authors whose proposals are accepted for publication.
- Potential authors should be aware of the minimum of two rounds of review and revision anticipated, plus language editing, if applicable, which will require quick turnarounds September-November 2020.
- The timeline is non-negotiable unless modified by RLS Brussels.
- We offer 3,000€ for each paper (to be invoiced by the contractor and paid by RLS Brussels after completion of the revision/editing process).

**The book**

This edited volume to which this chapters contributes will bring together scholars, researchers, activists and practitioners to discuss the state of democracy as well as to explore potential future developments in contemporary liberal representative democracy. It aims to take stock of and analyse the problems of contemporary democracy in Europe from a left-wing perspective. Second, it seeks to explore approaches to transforming democratic representation, participation and governance at any level (local, regional, national, supranational/transnational) with a view to forging an inclusive, equal, free, just and sustainable society.

**Timeline**

Submission of abstracts: WEDNESDAY, 15 July 2020, 11:00AM CEST *(EXTENDED DEADLINE!)*

Notification to authors: Thursday 16 July 2020

Submission of full papers: Tuesday, 15 September 2020

Minimum of two rounds of review & revision: September-November 2020 (submission dates TBC)

Language editing: December 2020 – January 2021 (dates TBC)

Publication: Spring 2021

**Application**

Abstracts of up to 1,000 words outlining the proposed argument and approach must be submitted to Ada Regelmann at ada.regelmann@rosalux.org, subject line: “[your name] - Abstract: The Crisis and Future of Democracy”, by Wednesday, 15 July 2020, 11am CEST. Late submissions will not be considered.