

Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right

Populism Research Unit-Ideology Research Unit- Mini Conference:

Populism & Ideologies in Times of Crisis



Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Online: Via ZOOM & Recorded

Event Rundown:

**\*\*Panel I: 10:00am-12pm (CET)\*\***

**\*\*BREAK: 12PM-1PM\*\***

**\*\*Panel II: 1PM-3PM (CET)\*\***

ZOOM Information

Meeting ID: 965 7860 5044

Passcode: 126151

ZOOM Link URL:

<https://cuhk.zoom.us/j/96578605044?pwd=MUdvdElhRXdYR1FyWnBRTi9FNWc5QT09>

(Waiting Room: Enabled)

### **CARR PRU-IRU Mini-Conference Themes:**

The world is currently undergoing a profound political, economic, health, and environmental crisis. The 'crisis' resembles the *zeitgeist*, a reminder of the uncertainty and volatility about the future of the world that we live in.

The disruptive power of crisis allows for a fundamental reconfiguration of the concepts and mind maps which orientate our views of the world.

Not only have the manifold crises disrupted liberal democracy globally and undermined its credibility but have also urged us to rethink political ideologies in times of a continuous lack of political imagination.

**The Mini Conference: Populism and Ideologies in Times of Crisis**, organized jointly by both the Populism (PRU) and Ideology (IRU) Research Units at The Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) seeks to address some of these key issues in global politics.

**Panel I: 10:00am-12pm (CET)**

**Theme: New Ideologies & Strategies of the Far Right in times of Crisis**

**Paper: Environmental politics of right-wing populism in power: A conditional care?**

**Balsa Lubarda**

**(Central European University)**

**&**

**Manuela Caiani**

**(Scuola Normale Superiore)**

**Abstract:**

The mainstreaming of right-wing populism (RWP) around the world entailed not only electoral successes and assuming power of these actors, but also expanding influence across various discursive and policy domains, such as environment. The existing research assessing the intersection of RWP and the environment is slowly departing from the sheer “anti-environmentalist” positions, most often explained through climate scepticism or lack of interest in environmental policies. The current salience of environmental issues and the dominant position has allowed RWP parties to outline an elaborate environmental discourse and policy stances. By focusing on three successful cases of right-wing populism in power: Poland (Law and Justice), Italy (Lega Salvini), and Hungary (Fidesz), this paper illuminates the contextual dynamics of RWP engagement with environment in both the national and international arena.

In doing so, this paper aims to identify the salience of environment in the overall discourse of RWP in power, before examining the extent to which environmental discourse of RWP in power inherits the core elements of RWP as an ideology. Finally, this paper also seeks to answer what kind of policy preferences do RWP in power have with respect to environment, and what are the common environmental issues these actors engage with. To reach these objectives, the paper will examine the electoral manifestos, social media posts, news items related to environmental policy, the speeches of party representatives, and four qualitative interviews conducted with party representatives.

**Paper: Defending democracy? Far-right populist PEGIDA during COVID-19**

**Sabine Volk**

**(Jagiellonian University)**

**Manès Weisskircher**

**(University of Oslo)**

**Abstract:**

This contribution explores the reactions of the Dresden-based far-right populist protest movement “Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident” (PEGIDA) to the COVID-19 pandemic. It examines continuities and changes in PEGIDA’s activism during the first wave of the pandemic and ‘lockdown’, specifically with regard to protest repertoires, networking, and discursive frames. Approaching PEGIDA as a social movement organization (SMO) which constitutes itself in and through public protest, the article analyzes continuities in PEGIDA’s cooperation with figures from the far-right scene as well as in established far-right populist articulation patterns. In turn, the analysis points to new, virtual forms of protest as well as new discursive frames which were in line with the anti-establishment “Querdenken”-movement. Finally, the article argues that PEGIDA could claim neither major mobilization success nor failure during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. This contribution is based on a novel ‘virtual ethnography’ during the pandemic.

**Paper: Right-Wing Party Competition in Europe: The Evolving Electoral Strategies of the Far-Right during Crises**

**James F. Downes**

**(The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

**&**

**Matthew Loveless**

**(University of Bologna)**

**Abstract:**

Right-wing parties appear to be updating their electoral strategies throughout the series of crises from the 2008-2013 economic crisis, the 2015-2018 refugee crisis, and onto the 2020 present COVID-19 pandemic. Recent research has demonstrated the centre right parties have been exploiting the immigration issue to hold off far-right challengers. In response, although the key issue dimension of immigration as an electoral strategy continues to serve as the *raison d’être* of far-right politics, newer far-right strategies are being introduced to mobilize supporters, such as the post-materialist issue of environmentalism (i.e.: eco-nationalism), with increasing success. We therefore ask: to what extent are far-right party strategies in Europe being updated across these crises and does

this translate into electoral success for far-right parties? Using a case study approach alongside quantitative data on party positions that is supplemented with elite interviews, we examine far-right parties' electoral strategies in Western Europe (Italy and France) alongside Central-Eastern Europe (Hungary, Poland & Slovakia) in the post-2018 EU Refugee crisis period. Our preliminary evidence identifies four main patterns of party strategies for the modern far-right in Europe that has important implications for liberal democracy.

## **Panel II: 1PM-3PM (CET)**

### **Theme: Populism & Protest Politics in times of Crisis**

**Paper: Populism, the radical right and the pandemic in Norway**

**Mette Wiggen**

**(University of Leeds)**

#### **Abstract:**

This paper will explore the links between the pandemic, the far right and the rise of the populist centrist party the Centre Party, Senterpartiet (SP) in Norway. I will argue that the pandemic, the rise of SP and internal conflict have led to the demise of the far right Fremskrittspartiet (FrP). FrP has largely supported the government who 'listened to the science', locked down early in March 2020; tested and traced and communicated very clearly with the public.

The mainstream uses anti-immigrant rhetoric like 'immigrant infection' so there is little space for FrP in opposition and they will not advocate for covid deniers or anti-vaxxers. FrP has had a turbulent year with internal conflict and the party now faces (SP) polling at 22% with charismatic politicians travelling around the country listening to people's grievances.

**Paper: From #Caytanos to #FreePabloHasél: the populist discourse of citizens protests in pandemic times**

**Carmen Aguilera-Carnerero**

**(University of Granada)**

#### **Abstract:**

During a whole year since the outbreak of the pandemic, citizens in Spain showed their dissatisfaction and disappointment with several of the government's decisions on the measures taken both on the crisis' management as well as other socio-political conflicts.

This paper studies the discourse built up in social media on two protests led by citizens belonging of both extremes of the political spectrum: the popularly called “Cayetanos,” or high-class citizens who protested the strict confinement imposed by the government, and the group of youngsters who took the streets in different parts of Spain against the court’s decision to jail rap singer Pablo Hasél. The study of these two types of discourses will unveil both the extreme polarization of political discourse in Spain and shed light on the different faces of Spanish populism.

**Paper: Ideological Ambiguity, Issue Blurring and Party Dissent: The Electoral Decline of the Populist Italian Five Star Movement (2018–2020)**

**Nicola Palma**

**(University of Bologna)**

**&**

**James F. Downes**

**(The Chinese University of Hong Kong)**

**Abstract:**

We examine the recent electoral decline of the ‘populist’ Italian Five Star Movement Party (M5S) post-2018 Italian General Election, after they entered coalition government. Drawing on party-level data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (2014, 2017 and 2019 waves) and regional election data (2014–2020) we argue that M5S’s recent electoral decline post–2018 can be explained by a combination of factors, namely: (a) M5S’s ‘ideologically ambiguous’ nature, alongside their blurring on key issues and (b) M5S’s increasing internal party factions (dissent) over ideological issues and (c) the ‘clear’ (clarity) stances adopted by their radical right electoral competitors, in the form of the League and the Brothers of Italy Parties. We argue that M5S’s future as a governing party is highly uncertain alongside its electoral future in Italian politics.