



VALTIOTIETEELLINEN YHDISTYS
STATSVETENSKAPLIGA FÖRENINGEN
FINNISH POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

7. Politics of Populism

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Työryhmän kuvaus: Populism has become a key term in contemporary politics, and a frequent object of study for researchers in Europe and beyond. This workshop is planned as an open platform for debating a multiple dimensions of populism, and try to answer quite a range of questions.

It is time to reflect upon this phenomenon: what is it about, how it emerged, how is it framed and how could or should it be understood? What would be the consequences of reflecting upon it as an ideology, rhetoric or movement – or a distinct party family or some wider phenomenon? How has the emergence of populism been problematized and contested? What are the effects of populism in politics?

We could reflect on the state of the discipline: Given that it has been such a popular topic, have the multiple studies of populism captured something crucial about populism that we could be learning from? Is populism studies a field of its own? Which dimensions would the field include? Would we consider it an interdisciplinary field?

We could also reflect on the potential relationship between populist and democracy: Is populism crucial to politics and democracy or something inherently anti-democratic? Is populism always something negative or can there be found something constructive or useful, for example through its politicizing character? Or is it fundamentalism anti-political, and anti-system? How exactly does populism challenge democracy?

Furthermore, we could discuss the aspects and dynamics of populism. Is populism empty rhetoric or are there some demands behind populist rhetoric and movements, and have they been dealt with? Should one approach populism as an aspect of all political parties? Would then populism be different in different cases and on which logics populism operates? Can a “normal” populist party become a “populist” one? Would the populism of larger mainstream and smaller contesting parties be different? What happens to populists in power?

This workshop focuses on politics of populism, populist rhetoric, political and cultural populism. The papers could address cases of populism, or be more theoretical. We welcome reflections on contemporary politics in Finland, histories of populism, right and left-wing populism in Europe and beyond. We could explore similarities and differences in the populist dynamics, rhetoric and movements between contexts or cases.

Abstraktit:

Women in Swedish Populist Radical Right Political Communication: Talking in their name or talking about them?

This study sheds light onto how the populist radical right ideology in the Swedish context is gendered, in the context of ideological normalisation efforts by means of mediatisation of politics. Evincing the populist radical right as a thin-centred ideology contingently adapted to national politics, it identifies welfare chauvinism and an instrumental approach to gender equality as particularly salient components in the Nordic context. Employing an innovative syncretic methodology the study then confirms that in Jimmie Åkessons speeches at Almedalen week, taken as an illustration of mediatisation of Swedish politics, only certain women are allowed to articulate their political concerns, but even these matters are filtered through and neutralised in order not to upset the conservative populist radical right proclivity towards preserving and enforcing traditional gender roles within the folkhem ([Swedish] peoples home).

Cristian Norocel (Helsingfors)

Irwin Goodman, a Populist Political Actor?

It is very common that artists in popular music comment on the surrounding political atmosphere and create their own representations of it. Some of the artists use their songs and their fame as an instrument to get their political messages across. In Finland, one of the most famous political artists was Irwin Goodman (1943-1991). He was seen at the time as a populist anti-governmental figure, who released many political songs commenting the Finnish government and society in the 1970s up to the 1990s. In my paper, I examine Irwin Goodmans songs that include clear political statements in their lyrics. I will concentrate especially on a few of the songs that are highly popular in todays Finnish society and that are used to explain and interpret the current financial and political situation in Finland. This kind of usage is visible in Youtube where the users describe the songs as being very spot on in the current political climate. I use a narratological method to analyze political messages in the songs that I have selected as examples. In this paper, I examine Irwin as a political actor through his own work and ask whether or not he was a populist.

Aki Luoto (Tampere)

From the margins to the mainstream: The Finns Party in the mirror of Helsingin Sanomat

Mainstreaming populism from the margins to the centre of political debates has taken place in Finland, in somewhat similar way as it has been taking place abroad. This paper particularly analyses the way in which the populist right-wing Finns Party has been discussed in the mainstream media and how this framing confirms the way in which from the outset at least the Finns Party fits into a stereotype of a populist party, which did not emerge to the core due to its racist undertones but despite them. The data includes opinion pieces and editorials published in the national daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*, from 2002 to 2011 and again from 2015. Developing on Ernesto Laclau's (2005) theory of populism, the exploration confirms the move from the fringe populist position to the mainstream, which nevertheless is not a solid position. In the mainstream, nevertheless the possibilities of fixing the political field of meaning-making is more possible than it is for a challenger party from the margins. The investigation is part of a larger study funded by the Academy of Finland, where the way in which populist rhetoric is always contestation on a binary that seeks to define the people (or a similar us group) and the issues under discussion and meanings made are spreading from the margins to the mainstream. It seeks to explain, with these populist dynamics, what has been happening in Finnish politics in the 2000s.

Emilia Palonen (Helsinki)

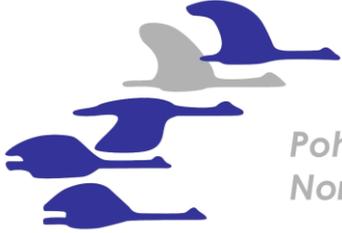
The concept of populism in the Finnish newspaper Helsingin Sanomat

The concept of populism is ambiguous and has a wide variety of interpretations. Taken as a given that concepts have no self-evident definitions or fixed meanings, the paper will focus on the concept of populism in its use in a specific context, namely in the daily *Helsingin Sanomat*.

The starting point is the Wittgensteinian idea according to which the meaning of a word is its use in the language. My approach is not, however, philosophical, but I will examine the concept of populism through the lens of conceptual history: how the concept is used within context and how it is defined and constructed in it. Among the main questions are, for example, whose concept 'populism' is, for whom and against whom it is used? What categories does it include and exclude? Is populism seen as a simplifying and un/nonpolitical factor or even as a re-politicising concept? How it is defined in relation to other concepts such as the people or democracy? Is it possible to trace shifts in meaning of the concept?

Primary sources of the research are editorials, columns and letters from public in *Helsingin Sanomat* before and after the year 2011. The views on populism in the leading newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* can be seen as a modest 'representative anecdote' (Kenneth Burke) about how populism was at the time perceived in the Finnish print media discussion.

Tuula Vaarakallio (Jyväskylä)



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