YOUTH IN EUROPE

OFFENBURG

TALKS "

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NATIONALISM, POPULISM & FAR-RIGHT IDEOLOGIES AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE – THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK

ABSTRACTS

2019

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            Lange Str. 54 · 77652 Offenburg

Erasmus+   MOViT   JUGEND für Europa
National Agency (Germany)
Erasmus + Youth in Action
European Solidarity Corps
FINNISH NATIONAL AGENCY FOR EDUCATION   JINT   SANA ARCHIMEDES

ABSTRACTS

1. Prof. Dr. Beate Küpper, University of Applied Sciences Niederrhein, "Anti-far-right extremism Project", Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation

"VERLORENE MITTE - FEINDSELIGE ZUSTÄNDE" ("LOST CENTRE – HOSTILE CONDITIONS")

The rise of right-wing populism is a challenge allover Europa. Populist actors strategically pick on wide spread distrust in politics, anti-democratic and hostile attitudes within the population, heat it up with populist rhetoric against "the elites", hate-speech against minorities and fabricated collective threats, that retroactive affects the overall mood in a country. The topic is particular crucial in Germany with its fascist history. The new right-wing populist party "Alternative für Deutschland" (Alternative for Germany, AfD) was successful in all recent elections and tends more and more to the extreme right. Meanwhile, it has affected the public discourse and political actions to some extent, but there is also awareness against a shift toward the right-wing extreme as well as growing resistance. The presentation will give a short introduction into common understandings of right-wing populism and why it challenges democracies. Here, it will highlight the (right-wing) populist antagonistic logics: on the vertical dimension between "the corrupt elites" and "the morally pure people", on the horizontal dimension between "us" and "them", pointing to several ethnic, cultural, religious and gender-related minorities, currently in particular towards immigrants, asylum seekers and Muslims, but also gender equality and "Europe", commonly accompanied by underlying anti-Semitism.

The presentation will present findings from the "Mitte-Studie" (study on the "societal center") by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation 2019, a representative population survey on group-focused Enmity directed towards several outgroups, right-wing populist and right-wing-extremist attitudes in Germany. Shortly, the presentation will address some major explanations for risings populism – encrustation of democracy, social-economic inequality, identity conflicts, shared values and general beliefs. It will suggest in addition a social-psychological perspective that perceives political opinions and votes as attitudes and behavior subject to well-known processes of attitude formation, persuasion, and social influence, that can be also perceived as functional for underlying common social motives of affiliation, self-enhancement, power and control. Results support clearly high levels of right-wing populist and right-wing-extremist attitudes that are shared within the "common population", but that are particular wide-spread among voters of the AfD, who also show significantly higher levels of affinity to violence. While in the past, Group-focuses Enmity (measured in the survey as anti-immigrant, racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, anti-Roma, homophobe and sexist attitudes) and harsh anti-democratic right-wing-extreme attitudes have risen with age, they are nowadays nearly as wide spread among young people than among older respondents. Right-wing populist respondents (and potential voters of the AfD) have enlarge medium socio-economic status, but score higher on social dominance orientation as well as on perceived status threat, relative deprivation, and neo-liberal values. Patters support an explanation that bridges resource, identity and value conflict

theories: the motive to maintain and enhance once own status via traditional group positions with all means. Young people, who try and need to find their position within societies, seem to draw on offered narratives and strategies, that promise higher status compared to other social groups.

2. Sven Gerst (IFLRY - International Federation of Liberal Youth), Germany

"WHY POPULISM IS NEITHER LEFT NOR RIGHT BUT ANTI-PLURALIST... AND HOW THE FAILURES OF LIBERALS HAVE PATHED THE WAY FOR POPULISM"

The rise of populism is often portrayed as a revival of nationalism, white identitarianism or even conservatism—so basically as a revival of old ideas. And while there certainly seems to be some validity to this analysis, there also seem to be severe shortcomings with reducing populism to just a modern day version right-wing ideology. In fact, when looking at political realities, it is often not at all clear where we should locate populists on the political spectrum: On the one hand, Marine Le Pen represents a socially and economically conservative agenda—which advocates against abortion and in favor of economic regulation, tariffs, and the strengthening of worker rights at the same time; on the other hand, Nigel Farage shares Le Pen's anti-immigration stance but otherwise favors a laissez-faire capitalist system—so a socially conservative and economically liberal agenda. Similar problems arise when attempting to place political leaders, such as Rodrigo Duterte, Nicolás Maduro, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan or even Donald Trump on the classical left/right spectrum. They seem to escape traditional ideological frameworks and therefore demand further conceptual clarification of the term "populism."

This paper aims to make three distinct contributions in this regard:
(1) By offering a comprehensive literature review of the use of populism in political theory and applies these philosophical underpinnings to the actual populist movements that we can observe all around the globe. Especially Victor Orban's transformation of Hungary to a socalled illiberal democracy serves as one important analytical source. I will argue that populism is defined by three main features: (1) the moralization of politics; (2) anti-pluralism; and (3) leader focus. And that these three features jointly ground the "us vs. them" narrative (based on Carl Schmitt's friend/enemy distinction) that populists tend to heavily rely upon in their political rhetorics.
(2) By contrasting populism with contemporary strands of Rawlsian liberalism (which informs many political liberal and progressive parties in Europe and the US), this paper offers a distinct spin of its conceptual analysis. It shows that populism can be best described as the "conceptual opponent" of liberal pluralism—and therefore moves beyond the classical left/right spectrum of ideological analysis. Populists invoke not only holistic conceptions of society based on historical and traditional narratives but also dismantle pluralist political institutions, such as civil society, the rule of law or multi-party systems.
(3) By offering a genealogy of contemporary liberal/progressive movements in the after-

math of the fall of the Soviet Union, this paper will argue that liberals have become intellectually complacent, i.e. failed to develop their vision of political pluralism. This complacency (most notably associated with the inevitable victory of liberal democracy sketched in Francis Fukuyama's The End of History and the Last Man) left the theoretical framework of liberal pluralism vulnerable to its opponents. Using the case study of Victor Orban, after all a former Vice President of Liberal International, I will argue that populists deliberately (i.e. in a targeted manner) attacked liberalism and liberal democracy where it was (and probably still is) the weakest: in its metaphysical justification of political pluralism.

The paper ultimately calls youth to join forces and to deliberate together about an updated and robust vision of pluralist democracy—and to reassert the values of diversity, acceptance, and toleration once again. In order to achieve long-term social change and to combat populist tendencies, youth needs to return to the sketch board of Utopian thinking.

3. Federico Pozzoni, Italy Belgium

"ANTI-IMMIGRATION AND ANTI-MUSLIM PREJUDICES: THE CASE OF MATTEO SALVINI AND LEGA'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN 2018 IN ITALY"

This paper aims to analyze the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim prejudices of the League, a far-right wing party that made use of anti-immigration programs during the former electoral campaign, and of its leader Matteo Salvini. First, I will refer to the historical occurrences that have led the League to become the most voted party within the right-wing spectrum currently, and to the emergence of Matteo Salvini as a young leader who refreshed the oldest political formation currently seated in Parliament. In particular, I will refer to the "Politics of fear" and the evolution of a so-called populist style of communication (Wodak 2015). Second, I will engage in a qualitative analysis of five representative pictures and related statements, posted on Matteo Salvini's official Facebook account. Through the visual-multimodal and discourse-historical analysis approaches, I will chronologically track the language conveying prejudices against immigrants and Muslims, focusing in the period between the official presentation of the party's symbol for the electoral run (21st of December 2017) and the voting day (4th of March 2018). Ultimately, I will draw some conclusions on the anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric, the use of prejudices and stereotypes for political purposes in the Italian context considered and the broader implications of this type of analysis.

4. Carmine Rodi Falanga, Italy

"ARE TROLLS WINNING THE MEME WARS? THE SPREAD OF RADICAL EXTREMISM IN THE ONLINE AND OFFLINE WORLDS. CASE STUDIES FROM POPULAR CULTURE"

Gramsci observed how cultural hegemony is also achieved by controlling popular culture. Today, the rise of right-wing, nationalist and populist ideologies is happening through social and digital media and "memes". Its effects move from the online world to the offline, in highly coordinated and elaborated strategies.

This paper will describe the so called "alt right" cultures and their influence on contemporary youth. Started in the United States, based on[1] a distrust of traditional political structures, mainstream media and "political correctness", they comprise elements of white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, racism and anti-semitism – sometimes concealed, sometimes open. And they are on the rise[2].

They developed mainly on websites like 4chan and reddit, and kept growing thanks to viral messages ("memes"") which made fun of societal issues. It has been a world building operation, which included characters, heroes, symbols and enemies.

Dr Alice Marwick, co-author of "Media Manipulation and Disinformation Online" [3], wrote that "fascist tropes first merged with irony in the murkier corners of the internet before being adopted by the alt-right as a tool". The alt-right is characterized by a creative and aggressive use of vignettes (or "memes"), with a great viral potential on social networks. In memes, "irony has a strategic function. It allows people to disclaim a real commitment to far-right ideas while still espousing them"[4].

In this process, the audience (often adolescents or young people) is first made less sensitive to specific issues, and progressively – although, not always – this can lead to embrace hateful views, including white supremacy, neo-fascism or racism.

This process of adopting a new world view – considered "superior" – is referred to as "red-pilling" (a reference to the 1999 film "The Matrix"). People who don't have access to these exclusive information and follow "mainstream" ideas are called "Normies" (from "normal"). Angela Nagle explored this process in her book "Kill all Normies" (2017).

Right-wing groups take coordinated and strategic actions to make proselytes, infiltrate and control cultural spaces – first online, then offline. Videogame culture is one of its frontiers, informatics being considered traditionally "white boys" territory.

My paper will describe different dimensions of the phenomenon, how young people first encounter these ideas and possibly become radicalized, as well as sketch out possible strategies for intervention. Youth work and education should not abandon these spaces, instead they can learn how to inhabit them and use appropriate methods to educate critical users and creators of content both online and offline.

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1 https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2017/8/15/16144070/psychology-alt-right-unite-the-right

2 https://www.vox.com/conversations/2017/7/21/15998246/alt-right-donald-trump-angela-nagle-kill-all-normies-interview

3 https://datasociety.net/pubs/oh/DataAndSociety_MediaManipulationAndDisinformationOnline.pdf

4 https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/23/alt-right-online-humor-as-a-weapon-facism

5. Alena Ignatovitch, Head of Youth Policy & Sociocultural Communication Department at National Institute for Higher Education, Belarus

"PREVENTION OF YOUTH RADICALIZATION AND PROMOTING DEMOCRACY: EUROPEAN SOFT MEASURES EXAMPLES ANALYSIS"

The study focuses on the analyses of policy measures on preventing youth radicalization and promoting democracy in certain countries of the European Union. Youth counter-radicalization policies are regarded both in terms of their efficiency and their socio-political impact. The study describes judicial mechanisms, administrative powers and prevention policies in some European countries (ex. the UK, France, Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands). The research is based on a comparative analysis, evaluates the effectiveness of the measures taken and highlights the ambiguous nature of some administrative practices. Various approaches to defining the concept of radicalization, nationwide strategies on radicalization prevention and countering, comparative analysis of European models of developing and testing new methods and approaches for promoting democracy and preventing radicalization through the internet are discussed in the paper.

6. Stefan Georgiev, Bulgaria

"EASTERN EUROPE AND FAR-RIGHT AMONG YOUTH – PREREQUISITES, MANIFESTATIONS, CONSEQUENCES. WHERE YOUTH WORK FAILS"

The paper will address several questions, listed in the call.

Firstly, focus mainly on Eastern European countries (where with no doubt far-right rhetoric and populism are growing stronger) and the empirical realities of this phenomena described in the call, more concretely the growing number of youth attracted by nationalistic, populist, and far-right narratives. This would be approached in respect with the followed consequences on political, social, cultural and even economic basis. The paper will address some of the questions in the call: "Is there a general change in values and attitudes of young people? Are there differences among countries (from Eastern Europe) or social milieus?"

Moreover, the paper will look in-depth for the preconditions for this resent development (5-7 years), and will focus mostly on the social and economic factors as main drivers for shift in perspectives, values and attitudes (this is the question from the call "What are the reasons for these trends, from where is what we see today coming from?").

In addition, examples from Bulgaria based far-right political parties youth fractions could be given. A special attention would be focused on the fact that Bulgaria is one of the very few EU member states where direct fascist and xenophobic practices are evident (Fascist march on main streets of Sofia every February[1]; The establishment of International nationalistic movement[2].

1 See here: https://www.dw.com/en/far-right-march-in-sofia-to-honor-pro-nazi-general/a-47552810
2 See here: https://balkaninsight.com/2019/04/15/bulgaria-far-rightists-to-host-european-neo-nazis-in-sofia/

The paper will develop a critical analysis on the Youth work in Eastern Europe as practice that is challenged on its way to address the above mentioned issues (questions from the call: "What is youth work doing and how can youth work approach affected young people? How can youth work tackle and thematise such values, believes and attitudes?" The text will also explore potential answer to the need of special or alternative approaches in line with the European social and human values. (question from the call: "Does youth work need to approach specific target groups or work with specific methods?")

Potential sources of empirical information, for the purposes of the paper:

- Few national Surveys, I have been part of, covering the attitudes of Bulgarian's, regarding the topic.
- A Regional Survey among Youth for Eastern European countries, organized and conducted by Friedrich Ebert Shtiftung in 2018;
- Media coverage from far-right events and performances from the past years.
- ETS and ETS competence model for youth workers to work internationally (as critical reference)
- Other relevant sources of information

7. Manfred Zentner, University of Krems, Austria

"YOUTH WORKER'S PERCEPTION OF EXTREME BEHAVIOUR – RESULTS OF THE PROJECT 'PROVIDING PERSPECTIVES – PREVENTING VIOLENCE'"

The Erasmus + funded project Providing Perspectives – Preventing Violence (PPPV) focussed on the perception of extremism and radicalism among youth workers in 5 European countries. The main questions of PPPV were if youth workers needed certain supportive measures to deal with the challenges of extremism, and if, how they should be provided. The accompanying research – based on extensive desk research, an online survey and focus groups in three countries – showed that youth workers have different interpretations of extreme behaviour as well as varied understanding of extremism or radicalism. It furthermore pointed to the fact that a broad range of interventions is already used in youth work to approach extreme behaviour or in the work with young people endangered to become radicalised into extremism. A main result was the perception of changes in violent behaviour: the increase of radical attitudes and world views is noted by youth workers among young persons, as is growing intolerance which is accompanied by increased acceptance of violence. The topics or issues framing the radical approaches vary and are specific in the different countries – nationalism in Croatia or in the UK, right wing extremism in Germany, antisemitism and homophobe attitudes in Austria – these allocations cannot be generalised but are owed to the main user groups of the different youth work service offers.

The research also highlighted the needs and wishes of how to support youth workers with information on the trends of specific extremism, with facilitating cooperation

with experts in the region, and on how to organise training for youth workers. It especially gives information on European/international training offers.

8. Moncho Ramón Martínez, Spain & Montenegro (DARE Network)

"POPULISM AND THE ROLE OF YOUTH WORK" – RESULTS OF A STUDY

Within the European network for Human Rights and Democracy Education DARE we organized between 2017 and 2018 a research on the rise of populism and role of youth work in 12 EU countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Romania, Spain and United Kingdom. Together with these re-searches, we created a set of recommendations for national and European level.

During these two years of project we went from our curiosity due to post-truth becoming word of the year to conclusions on the impact the new forms of propaganda and populism are having in society and more specifically on youth.

Our conclusions come in line with similar publications during 2018 and 2019 from European Commission, Council of Europe and United Nations, showing that we have broad information about the reasons why populism and radicalization are taking place, the consequences they have in youth and society, and the elements required for shifting towards more diverse and fair societies but, apart from specific local level exam-ples, no clear paths for preventing or counteracting this rise.

Inside the context of Erasmus+ mobilities we would also like to show the process of the research, recommendations and publication as a good practice. We did the com-plete process through a KA1 action with 4 mobilities funded by Jugend fur Europa and achieved a result in the line of long term KA2 projects.