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*Electronic Newsletter of the ECPR-SG on Extremism & Democrac*

**Electronic Newsletter of the ECPR-SG on Extremism and Democracy****Convenors and Managing Editors**

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## Standing Group Announcements

### Conference in Glasgow

During the 2014 ECPR General Conference in Glasgow (3-6 September), the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism and Democracy will hold a meeting for its members. In this meeting we will, among other issues, discuss changes to the SG's organization and functioning, which result from the SG framework adopted by the ECPR earlier this year, and the drafting of a constitution, which is required as a result of said SG framework. Your presence and input during this meeting would be most welcome. The meeting will take place:

When: Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of September from 12.45 to 14.00 hours

Where: Wolfson Medical Building, Floor 2, Room Ganochy

The SG also organizes a section titled 'Political radicalism in times of crisis' (S047). The section chairs are Stijn van Kessel, Andrea Pirro and Elisabeth Carter. The section includes six panels, which all take place in the Wolfson Medical Building, Floor 2, Room Ganochy.

- 'Beyond Class? The Radical Left and the Nation(al) Question' (P015)  
Thursday 4 Sept, 09:00 - 10:40  
*Panel chair: Luke March (University of Edinburgh)*
- 'Euro-scepticism revisited: The impact of the crisis on public opinion and civil society's visions for Europe' (P109)  
Thursday 4 Sept, 11:00 - 12:40  
*Panel chairs: Simona Guerra (University of Leicester) and John FitzGibbon (Canterbury Christ Church University)*
- 'Rallying the radicals: what do the radical left and the radical right have in common?' (P 296)  
Thursday 4 Sept, 14:00 - 15:40  
*Panel chair: Matthijs Rooduijn (University of Amsterdam)*
- 'The impact of radical parties in East and West European political processes' (P 357)  
Thursday 4 Sept, 16:00 - 17:40  
*Panel chairs: Andrea L. P. Pirro (University of Siena) and Stijn van Kessel (Loughborough University and Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf)*
- 'The Study of Populism Through Experiments' (P 388)  
Friday 5 Sept, 09:00 - 10:40  
*Panel chair: Kirk Hawkins (Brigham Young University)*
- 'What's left of the radical right? The social-economic programmes of radical right-wing populist parties' (P 409)  
Friday 5 Sept, 11:00 - 12:40  
*Panel chairs: Sarah L. de Lange (University of Amsterdam) and Simon Otjes (Groningen University)*

### Vacancy Book Review Editor

We regret to announce that, after the valuable work she has done for e-Extreme, Janet Dack has decided to step down as book review editor. We are therefore looking for a new book review editor, who is in charge of approaching reviewers, the distribution of books, and the collection of reviews. Applications for this position are more than welcome.

In addition, we are always looking for people to review books of interest to our members. So if you would like to review a particular book please get in touch with us. Likewise, contact us if you would like your own book reviewed in e-Extreme.

**Keep us informed!**

Please keep us informed of any upcoming conferences or workshops you are organizing, and of any publication or funding opportunities that would be of interest to Standing Group members. We will post all details on our website. Similarly, if you would like to write a report on a conference or workshop that you have organized and have this included in our newsletter, please do let us know.

Please also tell us of any *recent* publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in the 'publications alert' section of our newsletter, and please get in touch if you would like to see a particular book (including your own) reviewed in e-Extreme, or if you would like to review a specific book yourself.

Finally, if you would like to get involved in the production of the newsletter, the development of our website, or any of the other activities of the Standing Group then please do contact us. We are always very keen to involve more members in the running of the Standing Group! Email us at: [info@extremism-and-democracy.com](mailto:info@extremism-and-democracy.com).

## Conference Reports

### **Right turn for Europe? Right-wing populism, extremism, and the European elections**

Maternushaus, Cologne, Germany

17-18 March 2014

Organizers: German Federal Agency for Civic Education/bpb and the Regional  
Representation of the European Commission in Bonn

Gereon Flümman

Federal Agency for Civic Education (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung/bpb)

Roughly two months ahead of the European elections, the German Federal Agency for Civic Education and the Regional Representation of the European Commission in Bonn invited international scholars and practitioners who work in the field of right-wing populist and extremist attitudes and behavior to discuss current developments concerning the forthcoming ballots. More than 250 people from all over Europe and beyond gathered in Cologne.

Cas Mudde (University of Georgia) opened the conference with a keynote speech on the situation of right-wing parties in Europe. In opposition to the widespread feeling of a growing threat to European democracy from the right, Mudde tried to simmer down the negative expectations. In his opinion, there might be a little gain of votes by the political far right, indeed. But since the particular actors from different EU member states will probably not find together because of insurmountable ideological differences between eurosceptic, neo-nazi, ultraconservative, anti-Muslim parties and so on, they will not be able to form an effective and noticeable opposition. According to Mudde, the actually marginal relevance of far right parties does not justify their influence on the current mainstream political discourse.

Beate Küpper (University of Applied Sciences Niederrhein) and Tim Spier (University of Siegen) analyzed the differences between political attitudes and actual voting patterns in Europe. While attitudes of group-focused enmity have a certain prevalence among European voters, these prejudices do not necessarily transform into a corresponding voting behavior. Mr. Spier exemplified that opportunity structures, as well as political circumstances and individual social positions play a more important role. Nevertheless, Ms. Küpper stressed that the media and actors of civic education among others must confront prejudice structures to effectively counteract them.

In a panel discussion on topics of the right-wing populist and extremist scene in Europe, Ann-Cathrine Jungar (Södertörn University), Andreas Umland (National University of Kiev-Mohyla Academy), Piero Ignazi (University of Bologna), and Frank Decker (University of Bonn) tried to paint a broad picture. It became obvious that the issues of the populist and extreme right in Western, Northern, and Southern Europe are heterogeneous and therefore comprise multiple mobilization matters. Altogether, the far right seems to profit from a crisis of cultural identity and of political representation. The Eastern European right finds a common ground in antisemitism, anti-ziganism, and anti-communism.

At the end of the first conference day, the plenary split into seven panels on 1) the pressure of the far right on political discourse in Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands (Matthew Goodwin, University of Nottingham; Magali Balent, Robert-Schuman-Foundation; Annette Birschel, journalist), 2) the influence of the economic crisis on the political sphere in Italy and Greece (Caterina Froio, European University Institute; Vassiliki Georgiadou, Panteion University Athens), 3) right-wing extremism in Eastern Europe (Peter Učeň, International Republican Institute; Attila Mong, journalist; Radu Cinpoes, Kingston University London), 4) the EU as a universal enemy (Nicholas Startin, University of Bath; Andreas Speit, journalist), 5) immigrants and refugees as an election issue in the UK, Italy, and Sweden (Shamit Saggat, University of Essex; Monica Colombo, University of Milano-Bicocca; Anna-Lena Lodenius, journalist), 6) the question of anti-semitism as relic or reality in Hungary, the Netherlands, and Austria (János Gadó, journalist; Willem Wagenaar, Anne-Frank-Foundation; Karin Stögner, University of Vienna) and 7) Muslims and Islam as hostile stereotypes (Farid Hafez, IRPA Vienna / Columbia University; Wolfgang Benz, Technical University of Berlin).

The next day started with a panel discussion on experiences with government participation and toleration of populist right-wing parties in the Netherlands, Denmark, and Italy. Due to the influence of Geert Wilder's Party for Freedom (PVV), Sarah L. de Lange (University of Amsterdam) observed a shift to the right in political and economic discourse in the Netherlands, which could easily be transferred to the European level after the elections. The Danish People's Party (DF) has changed the country's liberal perception of itself and feeds widespread anti-Muslim and eurosceptic feelings among the Danish public, finds Rune Engelbreth Larsen, a journalist and author from Copenhagen. The Italian Northern League, according to Daniele Albertazzi (University of Birmingham) benefits from the circumstances of the Italian party system as the League is seen as essential part of a possible center-right government by those who would prefer such a political constellation. In spite of its partly extremist views, it has become a "normal" factor in Italian politics.

The discussion was followed by a "World Café", in which thirteen mostly civil society organizations presented their work for tolerance and democracy in the European Union. The issues ranged from anti-racist, queer, or intercultural NGOs to players in the field of help and acceptance for refugees as well as citizenship education.

The conference ended with another panel discussion that left the sphere of right-wing populism and extremism behind and rather focused on actual perspectives for the development of the European Union. Representatives from nearly the whole relevant German political scene and a spokesperson of the German NGO "Pro Asyl" vibrantly debated their views. The discussion demonstrated the variety of choices concerning European integration that voters can make at the end of May.

The conference documentation can be found at: [www.bpb.de/182457](http://www.bpb.de/182457) (mostly in German, some videos in English).

**Rolling Back The Rollback:  
Spaces and strategies for reviving democracy and open societies in Europe**

School of Public Policy at Central European University  
7 April 2014

Polina Georgescu  
Member of the Organizing Committee

The School of Public Policy (SPP) at Central European University (CEU) hosted a one-day Forum on 7 April 2014 to analyze recent events and developments in a number of European countries, which give rise to serious concerns about the stability of democracy and pose growing challenges to the prospects of open societies in Europe. The Forum was held the day after the Hungarian parliamentary election, providing a timely platform for open discussions about democratic prospects in Europe, the role of the European Union in upholding democratic standards, the opportunities and limitations of digital democracy and not the least, the spaces and strategies available for young actors across Europe in countering democratic rollback.

The Forum was organized by SPP in partnership with the Hertie School of Governance and with the support of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Open Society Initiative for Europe. The opening panel revisited the rollback of democracy from an interdisciplinary perspective, focusing on legal, political, economic and societal issues in the context of anti - democratic trends. In the light of Hungarian events, the panelists drew ample examples from recent developments in the country. From a legal perspective, Renáta Uitz (CEU) argued that in Hungary, as elsewhere, the magic of national constitutions has faded, which in the Hungarian case is reflected in a significant rise of exit and radical voices, following widespread dismantling of constitutional checks and balances by the governing two-third majority. In the opinion of Gaspar Miklos Tamas (CEU), the constitution has never served the function of the unifying force in Hungary and the constitutional void, accompanied by evaporating political loyalty, has been filled by political culture of pragmatism and utilitarianism. According to Tamas, this facilitated the creation of a double state in Hungary: a welfare state for the middle class and a police state for the rest. Béla Greskovits (CEU) highlighted the importance and the need for broad, as opposed to narrow, interpretations of democracy and the necessity to bridge the gap between responsible and responsive government as a means for preventing further democratic rollback.

During the second panel, scholars and policy-makers debated whether or not the EU serves as a credible guardian of democracy. Drawing a parallel with the first panel, Jan Werner Mueller (Princeton) argued that the EU cannot serve as a guardian of democracy being itself subject to 'constitutional capture', whether formal or informal, characterized by a gap between theory and practice, with no measurable doctrine in place for protecting democracy in its member states. Franziska Brantner (member of the German Bundestag), Heather Grabbe (Open Society European Policy Institute) and Andras Jakab (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) agreed that while the EU does make a judgment upon whether a country is a democracy or not (albeit only at the time of accession), the absence of 'acquis democratique' leaves the Union with no good response to rogue states within its borders short of Article 7, which is in practice not operational. The speakers outlined however, that legal institutions in place do, to a reasonable extent, ensure the protection of fundamental rights and good governance in the EU and agreed that country monitoring, wherein commission can give detailed reports that allow a wider public debate, would be a step in the right direction.

The third panel shifted the discussion to forward-looking analysis, examining the emergent field of digital democracy, brought by the advent of ubiquitous internet, and scrutinized its inherent opportunities and limitations. While Julia Schramm (Pirate Party Germany) focused her remarks on the deficit of privacy in the online space, Balazs Bodo (Budapest University of Technology and Economics) argued that the main challenge to digital democracy is converting online presence into a physical presence. Tim Dixon (Purpose.com, Europe) took a more positive stance, outlining a number of innovation tactics for the Internet as a potential bridge between elites and publics in what he described as a window of opportunity for innovation created by the breakdown of traditional institutions. These included the need to shift from issue-focused mobilization to movement thinking, building movements around people's identity; the need to have good narratives and authentic voices (as opposed to charismatic leaders); and the importance of diversity in choosing the movement's tactics.

The day proceeded with four parallel working groups that brought together young actors from various sectors across Europe to discuss spaces and strategies for democratic revival as seen from the perspective of: (1) Legal Institutions, (2) Political Narratives, (3) Civil Society and (4) Economic Regime. Their conclusions and recommendations will be published in a policy paper later in 2014.

SPP's Founding Dean Wolfgang Reinicke closed the Forum by emphasizing that well-informed changes are needed to counter the rollback of democracy in Europe and that these can be healthy if they replace ineffective democratic mechanisms. He invited all participants to continue these timely conversations beyond the Forum space.

The program of the Forum, its materials as well as video recordings of the panels can be found at <http://spp.ceu.hu/rollback>.

**Up to the Mainstream?  
Radical Right Populist Parties in the New Millennium**  
Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam  
19-20 June 2014

Tjitske Akkerman  
Member of the Organizing Committee

The radical right party family has gone through various transitions during the past three decades. After their electoral breakthrough in the late 1980s and 1990s, various radical right parties have entered government as full blown coalition partners or as support parties of minority governments. This raises the question whether and under what conditions radical right parties are up to the mainstream. Experts from various countries in Western Europe came together in Amsterdam to address this question. The idea that these parties will eventually become more mainstream is widespread, as it is often assumed that the democratic process and experience in office will 'tame' radical parties. The starting point of the seminar, however, was that such 'mainstreaming' is not automatic and depends very much on the strategies that parties choose. We focused on various kinds of mainstreaming. First, we looked at the question whether radical right parties increasingly emphasize 'mainstream issues'. Second, we assessed whether radical right parties move towards the positions of mainstream parties. And, third, we looked at whether radical right parties have become less populist over the years.

As a first step we assessed change comparatively at both the demand and the supply side of the political arena. Wouter van der Brug presented a comparative analysis of voter profiles over time. At the demand side, there is no sign that the parties have become more mainstream. On the contrary, the socio-structural profile of voters has become more rather than less polarized; the less educated blue collar workers have moved towards the radical right and the well educated professionals have moved away from these parties. Tjitske Akkerman, Sarah de Lange and Matthijs Rooduijn assessed trends in the programmatic profiles in terms of salience and party positions since the turn of the century. Their analyses made clear that at the supply side there is not much evidence for an evolvment towards the mainstream either. The parties have not moderated their positions on cultural issues since the turn of the century. The main dynamic is that they are increasingly extending their issue profile to socio-economic issues. Although Van der Brug's analysis of voters showed that there is a niche at the demand side for parties with a left-wing socio-economic profile and a right-wing cultural profile, there are hardly any radical right parties that have been responsive. The parties are generally still at the right side of the socio-economic dimension, even though some have shifted towards the center. Joost Van Spanje focused on the conditions for success of exclusion strategies of mainstream parties. He found that exclusion strategies are successful when mainstream parties 'parrot the pariah', that is when they ostracize the radical right party while taking over their positions. In other words, this analysis falsifies the claim that voters prefer the original over the copy .

The main part of the seminar was devoted to case studies. Case studies are the best approach to assess moderation, radicalization or continuity of policy agendas, voter profiles, and, most importantly, the party strategies behind the observed changes. Parties with experience in national office – the Danish People's Party, the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Swiss People's Party, the Austrian Party for Freedom, and the Norwegian Progress Party – were compared with parties without such experience, such as the True Finns, the French Front National, The Flemish Bloc/Interest, and the United Kingdom Independence Party. The experts presenting the cases were Flemming Christiansen, Sarah de Lange and Tjitske Akkerman, Oskar Mazzoleni, Reinhard Heinisch and Kristina Hauser, Anders Jupskas, Ann-Cathrine Jungar, Gilles Ivaldi, Paul Lucardie, and Matthew Goodwin. Discussants were Joost van Spanje, Simon Otjes, Sarah de Lange and Tjitske Akkerman.

The comparative analyses indicated that the parties are generally trying to maintain their successful niche profile on immigration and other cultural issues, but at the same time also aim to extend their appeal to voters that find socio-economic issues most important. The case studies made clear, though, that the genetic origins of the parties and the variety of conditions under which they operate require a more refined conceptualization of 'mainstreaming'. The notion of 'mainstreaming' should be broadened to do justice to this variety. The management of reputations, for instance, is an important aspect of 'mainstreaming' , as the 'de-demonization' strategy of the French Front national under Marine Le Pen shows. Another aspect of 'mainstreaming' that is important to take into account is the extent to which the parties conform to or bend the rules of the game in government and in opposition.

With a clear focus, excellent experts and well-prepared papers, the exchange of ideas and knowledge was highly productive and exciting. Moreover, the seminar also provided a solid foundation for a book publication. We will let you know when this publication arrives, so keep track of this newsletter.

## Book Review

**Keith Hodgson (2014), *Fighting fascism: the British Left and the rise of fascism, 1919–39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 256 pages, ISBN: 978-0-7190-9121-6, £14.99.**

Reviewed by Alex Carter  
Teesside University

Coming just as large numbers of far-right parties have gained seats in the European Parliament, this is a timely re-release of Keith Hodgson's accessible and informative study into the British left's response to the rise of fascism between 1919 and 1945.

Hodgson's aim in this book is twofold: to explain the variations and developments in the analyses of fascism across the British left, and to re-assess the utility of a left-wing class-based analysis of fascism in light of more recent approaches to the subject (a dichotomy Hodgson describes as 'objectivity and opposition'). The former he achieves with more success than the latter.

The book begins by asserting that while all left-wing groups shared a class-based analysis of fascism, viewing it as a reactionary force aimed at subjugating the working-classes, there were however differing views on the origins, causes and means of opposing fascism. The fundamental cleavage of opinion was that between revolutionaries and reformists; however, there was still further discord within both these ideological camps (for example, the Trotskyite opposition to the Comintern dominated CPGB).

The development of these views is traced by Hodgson through the different groups' interpretations of the contests between left-wing groups and reactionary forces in Europe during the interwar years. The British left-wing parties all viewed the events in Hungary, Russia, Italy and Germany through their own specific ideological lenses. On the whole, reformist groups such as Labour and the TUC, who were committed to parliamentary democracy, equated extreme left and right groups, viewing them as being as bad as each other. For them, strong democratic structures were the best defence against fascist (and communist) totalitarianism. By the time fully-fledged fascism had reared its head, they considered that the provocative actions of the revolutionary left in Italy and Germany had threatened the established interests of the ruling elites in those countries, and thus provoked a reactionary backlash which strongly contributed to the event of fascist dominance.

The more radical Marxist groups, such as Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation and the Communist League, however, perceived liberal democracy to be the seedbed of capitalism. Once this was threatened by the growing power of the increasingly militant labour movement, the ruling classes employed fascism to maintain their power. As far as the far-left was concerned, the social democratic parties' refusal to work with their revolutionary comrades, and instead kowtow to aggressive right-wing organisations and parties, divided the working-classes and so handed victory to fascism. These differing analyses of events in Europe informed the eventual strategies employed by the reformists and revolutionary groups in Britain against the British Fascisti (BF) and the British Union of fascists (BUF).

Of particular interest here, however, is Hodgson's contention that the differing views on the rise of fascism, and the different ideas on how to combat it, shifted the organisational and ideological landscape of the left in Britain. For instance, the Independent Labour Party's

(ILP) increasingly radical view on fascism contributed to its departure from Labour, and 'allowed the party to think and act in ways which would not have been possible had it remained a resentful, but ultimately constrained, element within Labour' (p6). Further, the former members of the ILP who remained within Labour formed the Socialist League, and 'the analysis of fascism espoused by the Socialist League was significant in its own terms, and as a contribution to the debate within the Labour party.' (p7)

However, Hodgson's concluding argument that a left-wing class-centric analysis of fascism is superior to its competitors, while elegantly presented, is less convincing. His main contention here is that non-Marxist analyses pay too much attention to the fascists' espoused ideology, and not enough attention to their actions. While there is some merit to this point, Hodgson does not apply enough of a sustained critical analysis to his own left-wing perspective. For instance, early on Hodgson himself highlights some of the more salient charges levelled against Marxist analyses of fascism, such as Roger Eatwell's point that 'failure to take fascism seriously as a body of ideas makes it more difficult to understand how fascism could attract a remarkably diverse following in some countries' (p18); a criticism Hodgson fails to convincingly rebut. A similar point could be made about Nazi Germany, where Hitler managed to successfully unite Germany behind him, including large parts of the working-classes. Hodgson's monolithic view of class-conflict precludes him from addressing these points, and his assertion that 'the diverse social composition of fascism ... was merely an indicator of the effectiveness of the false promises made by its leaders' (p58) is unconvincing in explaining the depth of attachment many of the adherents - and not just capitalists and party leaders - felt towards the movement.

Further, Hodgson's left-wing approach to his subject matter does lead to some obvious bias in his coverage. For example, in addressing the BUF in the 1930's, Hodgson describes them as having embarked on a sustained campaign of violence against both the left and Jewish communities. While this was no doubt partly true - the Jewish community of the East End certainly endured a period of vicious violence and hostility from the BUF - his account is negligent in not mentioning the violent and disruptive tactics which anti-fascists conducted against the BUF. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the BUF were more victims of left-wing aggression than vice versa. However, whether or not one accepts Stephen Cullen's thesis that the BUF were more sinned against than sinning in the area of political violence, in the interests of balance this argument should at least be mentioned. Elsewhere, Hodgson presents the fact that the then Conservative Home Secretary Joynson-Hicks had intervened in the trial of a number of fascists who had attacked a van delivering the ILP's *Daily Herald* as evidence that the Conservative party had dangerous connections to fascism. However, he fails to mention that (the very right wing) Joynson-Hicks had also barred the British Fascists from becoming special constables, or from taking part in the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies during the General Strike of 1926.

However, despite these flaws, this is a fine book with much to offer for students of fascism, anti-fascism and the history of the British left. A major strength lies in the attention he pays to the smaller and often overlooked parties on the radical British left, such as the Plebs' League, the Workers' Socialist Federation, and the Trotskyite British Section of the Left Opposition. This volume should not only inform future students on the British left's response to fascism, but also provoke comparative analysis on the merits between the various theoretical approaches to the subject matter.

**Publications Alert**

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- Frazera, E. and Hutchings, K. (2014) 'Feminism and the critique of violence: negotiating feminist political agency', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 19 (2), 143-163.
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- Gurses, M. (2014) 'Islamists, democracy and Turkey: A test of the inclusion-moderation hypothesis', *Party Politics*, 20(4): 646-653.
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