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Populism in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans

Whereas there has been enormous attention paid to the rise of rightwing and leftwing populism (and Euroscepticism) in Western and Southern Europe, the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe have largely escaped the attention of scholarship outside the work of area specialists (but see Gherghina, Mişcoiu, and Soare – *Contemporary Populism* 2013). To the extend post transition societies feature both the scholarly and public discourse in the West, they are seen as relevant in the context of further European integration and thus impinging directly on Western European interests. Thus, Hungary's Victor Orban and Poland's governing Law and Justice Party have been the exceptions from these lacunae. Yet, even here there is a tendency not to give equal weight and attention to the developments observed that one would afford West European political systems. Some parts of Eastern Europe especially those outside the European Union are still seen as politically less mature and consolidated and thus more volatile where political 'pathologies' ranging like public corruption, authoritarianism, and populism are often treated as 'ordinary' or to be 'expected'. This extends also to attempts at classifying parties and political leaders in the Western Balkans, which are often painted with a broad brush and summarily labeled populist. Work undertaken in the region itself often takes the form of case studies or does not connect well to standard theories of populism and party politics more generally.

Overall, little systematic comparative analysis has been undertaken that seeks to categorize, understand, and explain the wide variety of political parties and actors that shape politics in Eastern and Southern Europe and have been summarily labeled populist.

This workshop invites papers and presentations that:

a) seek to explain the actions political leaders, parties, and voters in terms of existing theories on populism.
b)   seek to understand to what extent and in what ways the different conceptualizations of populism can be applied as explanations to the political systems across Eastern Europe and the Balkans.
c) seek to develop explanations of political developments in this regions that are consistent with standard theories about populism.
d) seek to add to, or develop further conceptualizations of populism given the specific nature of the political systems in the region.

All contributions therefore need to address specifically the following questions:

1)   Which party/ies in your country do you currently (at the time of writing) consider populist and why (try to ground your assessment in the standard literature on populism (Mudde, Minkenberg, Gherghina…). Select the party/ies that come closest if no formation fits well with the definitions and explain why.

2) How are this/these parties similar/different to/from populist parties in Western Europe. How do they for example construct the "true people" – based on ethnicity, religion, language, culture?
3) What can you say about the organization of this/these parties, their activists, and their voters?
4) What makes these parties successful?
5) What relationship exists with other parties/the mainstream (divergent/outsider, convergent, cordon sanitaire, they are the mainstream, etc.).
6) What impact has/have this/these parties have had on the party system, on politics in general, and on policies? Be sure to include also if applicable a segment on Europe/the EU.
7) Report on an aspect that you consider important share; perhaps something that is unique or often overlooked when analysing the politics in your country.

The final objective would be to publish a selection of high-quality analytical and empirical papers in an edited volume under Nomos Series on Populism.

Schedule

1) Send a max. 500 word proposal as soon as you can (if have not done so)

2) The first version of the contribution (8,000 words maximum, everything included) is due on **15 February 2017**.

3) Following some feedback, complete a finalized draft for the Salzburg workshop a few days before the meeting so that it may be disseminated and discussed.

4) At the workshop we will joint review the chapters and address issues of inconsistency.