

Populism and Rural Areas

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The meaning of populism for civil society

- Checks and balances of democracy (penal populism)
- Anti-discrimination policy violations (race, gender, LGBT,)
- Environment (climate deniers)
- Rejection of intermediary institutions
- Anti-cosmopolitanism
- Euroscepticism as anti-elitism. The future of the EU.
- Anti-elitism as anti-experts (anti-education).
- Need for simplification and communication issues.
- Anti-globalization in economic terms.

Why in rural areas?

- Values are socially more conservative
- Poverty is felt more strongly in the occupational mix of the countryside
- Resentment in general. Farming as a disappearing profession. Unspecified anger.
- Thus economic and cultural reasons are compounded
- Civil society is weaker
- Less able to build community

Connections between grievances and populist framing

- Grievances are framed in terms of the available political offering.
- They also reframe populist movements
- Examples from the pitchfork movement in Italy and the League.

What to do?

- Strengthen civil society.
- Alert civil society to populism.
- Stress their judicial activism, community building, collaboration.
- Not their publicity campaigns.
- Educate and incentivize it to collaborate.
- Build transport infrastructures to stop isolation. Improve agricultural policy for small farmers.
- Varieties of antipopulism: enhance equality, solidarity, democratic checks and balances, community building, compassion.

Civil society at EU level

- Realized the issue of populism late
- Confused it with the crisis
- Confused it with EU-level changes
- Spent too much time writing proposals
- Populism means different things for civil society. Discrimination on their on ground, racism, the law

Methodology

- 1390 papers, speeches, press releases from OCS, Commission, Parliament selected if they were on two of these topics:
- Populism, Discrimination, Hate speech, Xenophobia, Euroscepticism, Migration
- They were analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

Civil society and the role of Europe

- Europe however is seen as instrumental in stopping the spreading of racism, as in the following excerpt.
- Europe is witnessing a rise in xenophobic and Eurosceptic trends which play upon uncertainties by promoting exclusive views on identities, stigmatising minorities and questioning the legitimacy of the EU and its values. ... Pro-democracy and pro-European forces, still have the capacities to reaffirm the fundamental democratic values, and the European project is a way to answer the identity crisis (D11, Egam, 24.10.18).