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Open call for paper proposals



ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops 2021

Virtual workshop “Populism and Democracy: Between the Myths and Epics in Latin America” (VIRTUAL020)

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<https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PanelDetails/10487>

Chairs Aline Burni (German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)) and Régis Dandoy (Université Libre de Bruxelles) invite for the submission of proposals to the workshop “Populism and Democracy: Between the Myths and Epics in Latin America”, to be held in the upcoming 2021 ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshop and endorsed by the ECPR Standing Group on Latin American Politics. Please submit your paper proposal via [this form](#) by **Monday 8 February 2021**. You can find the guidelines to propose a paper on the [ECPR page](#).

Outline of the workshop:

The vast literature on populism is proof of its importance, even if scholars have failed to agree on a definition (Ionescu & Gellner, 1969; Larraín, 2018; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2019; de la Torre, 2000, 2017). Populism has recently been at the centre of political and academic debates due to the rise of populists in Europe and Latin America. As for the latter, there is no doubt it has been used as a prism to examine different populist governments in the globe. Hence, the epistemological construction of populism is largely due to Latin American experiences, especially from the 20th century (Larraín, 2018).

The democratic history of Latin America is complex, marked by moments of (non-populist) authoritarianism and return to democracy in the 1980s. One could think of democracies that were not fully consolidated or unfinished (Ramos Jiménez, 2008), but no longer incipient, which again interact with new waves of populism in the 21st century. The debate connecting democracy and populism is not exhausted. At its centre, there is the question on whether and how each phenomenon creates opportunities and challenges for political participation and inclusion.

Theorists dealing with democracy and populism have versions at both ends. On the one hand, there is the idea that populism is the shadow of democracy, or postulates an intrinsic danger for it (Rosanvallon, 2007; de la Torre, 2013). On the other hand, it is the conception of populism as the mirror of democracy (Laclau, 2005; Panizza, 2009, Mouffe, 2018). Democracy is understood as a unique system that determines the relationship between rulers and ruled (Schmitter & Lynn, 1991). Debates around democracy integrate its deviations to forms of authoritarianism (Dahl, 1977), and thus relating with populism. Some scholars argue that populism is a corrective mechanism to democracy and both are not necessarily incompatible (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987; Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). Mudde & Kaltwasser (2013, 2019) or Wolkenstein (2016) assume that populism is compatible with democracy and raises questions about the problems that lie in the implementation of democracy. It can be seen as a threat or as a corrective force. Hence, populism *per se* is neither good nor bad for the democratic system.

A key factor that continuously sparks the debate is the fact that populist leaders tend to emerge in democracies. Representative democracy seems to work as a channel for the populist discourse that constructs the people and the elites as antagonistic groups (De la Torre, 2013, Urbinati, 2019). While in some definitions of populism the figure of the personalistic leader is prominent (Weyland, 2001), for others this is not a defining feature (Mudde, 2004). However, this can be a point worth of further discussion in the case of Latin America, where presidential regimes are predominant, parties are less institutionalised than in other consolidated democracies, and individual leaders play a central role in politics. Does populism

assume particular characteristics in the Latin American context? To which extent are these features conditioned by institutional traits found in the regimes and the political-history of the region?

Bearing in mind that the field of populism and democracy have a long trajectory of study, we recognize the renewed importance it has taken in different parts of the world, especially in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. This worldwide context of crisis could allow future comparisons of Latin American with European cases. With this workshop, we seek to foster a fruitful scholarly exchange between these subjects that keep evolving. We are interested in bringing together studies that deal with both theoretical reflections and empirical research. The workshop seeks to highlight the central aspects of Latin American populism, together with the present and future challenges of democracy in the region.

Some of the questions that the contributions to this workshop could address are the following: How has populism been defined and evolved in the context of Latin America, both conceptually and empirically, in relation to democracy? What major cross-country differences exist with respect to these two phenomena? What are the drivers of populism and how does it affect democracy in the region? How do demand-side and supply-side factors interact to explain the rise of populist leaders in different waves? What is the role of social media in the populist surge and what are the links of this new communication tool with populism and democracy? How can this moment of growing populism be a channel to rethink liberal democracies and their functioning? What new reflections could be made in the context of the Covid-19 crisis?

We welcome contributions from both established and junior researchers (PhD students), who are based either in Europe, Latin America or in other regions of the world, and who study Latin America. This workshop is open to scholars working on democracy, scholars working on populism and on the intersection of the two. We are committed to putting together a diverse group of discussion, which includes balance in terms of gender, academic experience, and regional institutional affiliation. We strongly encourage participation of scholars from minority and underrepresented groups in academia. We are open to a large diversity of methodologies and research designs and we welcome both in-depth case studies and comparative works. This workshop aims at building a network of scholars investigating populism and democracy in Latin America and at leading to collective efforts in terms of research projects and publications.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Aline Burni (Chair) (aline.burni@die-gdi.de) or Régis Dandoy (Co-chair) (rdandoy@ulb.ac.be).