



The XIII conference "People, Politics, Participation. Governing the Fragile Rural Areas in Italy and Europe" - March 22-23, 2019 (Rovigo, Italy)

The international panel:

## **UNDERSTANDING, RESISTING AND BUILDING ALTERNATIVES TO RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN THE EUROPEAN COUNTRYSIDE**

### ***Description:***

Right-wing populism has been marching across Europe. Today, every third European government consists of or depends on an authoritarian populist party. Not for the first time, right-wing populist movements have been spreading across this continent, but the current wave is, perhaps, the most significant one since the end of World War II. The contemporary right-wing populist parties have a strong rural constituency, as was evident by recent elections and referendums. The populist leaders are rising by tapping into discontent in the countryside and exploiting rural resentments against elites, migrants and ethnic minorities.

This panel aims to deepen the understanding of the rise of right-wing (authoritarian) populism in the European countryside, as well as the forms of resistance occurring and the alternatives being built. We aim to contribute to the debates and activism among scholars, activists and social movements, who seek to better understand the right-wing populist upsurge, develop the efficient strategies of resistance, and build sustainable alternatives to this dangerous political trend in Europe and globally. The panel discussion will include the following three topics:

1) **UNDERSTANDING** the rise of right-wing populism in rural Europe.

In order to tackle the contemporary right-wing populist upsurge and to build positive alternatives, we need to understand the processes in the European countryside. The globalisation of agriculture, unfair and simplistic EU's Common Agricultural Policy, multinational corporations' control over the agri-food system, the Eurozone crisis, the migrant/refugee crisis and other hazards of neoliberalism have exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and created mass discontent among the European rural population. The people's dissatisfaction with the present-day situation and their fears and anxieties have been ardently manipulated by right-wing populist leaders, who claim to defend the interests of ordinary people against unfairly advantaged 'Others' (primarily, elites and migrants).

2) **RESISTING** the right-wing populist uprising in rural Europe.

The European countryside does not only provide the breeding ground for right-wing populism. There are a number of local rural initiatives that aim to resist this dangerous political trend. For example, the Village Action Movement in Sweden brings together issues of social justice, environmental protection and works toward offering job opportunities to immigrants in Sweden. The Italian rural movement and network Fuorimercato ('Outside the market') supports farmers and migrant workers in their collective acquisition (renting) of land and other means of production, and promotes the collective and democratic self-management of farming operations. However, the European rural actions and groupings lack the ideological and organisational coherence of their counterparts in the Global South. In order to curtail right-wing populism in Europe, rural activists must create new forms of communalism and solidarity and connect into a broad front of resistance.

### 3) **BUILDING ALTERNATIVES** to right-wing populism in the European countryside.

The progressive agrarian movements and/as food sovereignty movements hold the potential to erode right-wing populism and advance more promising progressive alternatives. Similar to right-wing populism, agrarian and food sovereignty movements emerged in response to the multiple crises caused by neoliberal capitalism. However, while right-wing populism is regressive, exclusionary and supports capitalism; food sovereignty is inclusive, proactive and offers an alternative to the unsustainable neoliberal capitalist food system. This panel aims to bring together scholars and activists, who by joint effort will be able to discuss and develop progressive sustainable alternatives in the form of emancipatory rural politics.

#### **ABSTRACTS SUBMISSION:**

The abstracts (up to 2 000 characters long) should be written in English and address any of the aforementioned topics. **The abstract submission deadline: December 31, 2018.** Please send your abstract + short bio of the author(s) to Natalia Mamonova ([Natalia.Mamonova@ui.se](mailto:Natalia.Mamonova@ui.se)) and CC to [areefragili.rovigo@gmail.com](mailto:areefragili.rovigo@gmail.com). Please indicate in your email that it is “**the abstract for ERPI panel - Fragile Areas**”. The notification of acceptance/rejection of the abstracts submitted will be sent to you via email by January 31, 2019.

#### ORGANISERS OF THE PANEL:

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#### EMANCIPATORY RURAL POLITICS INITIATIVE (ERPI) EUROPE

*ERPI Europe is a collective research project/initiative on rural Europe, which is aimed at understanding the rise of right-wing (authoritarian) populism in the European countryside, as well as the forms of resistance occurring and the alternatives being built. Europe is taken in its widest sense to include the European Union as well as the ‘wider Europe’. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers, who work on rural issues across Europe. This initiative is a part of the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) that is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian right-wing politics.*

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