

Investigating Populist Attitudes: Sources, Formation, Activation and Correlates

Interdisciplinary small-group meeting
12-13 Sept. 2019 at WZB, Berlin

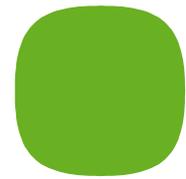
organized by:

Heiko Giebler (political scientist), Magdalena Hirsch
(sociologist/psychologist), Benjamin Schürmann
(communication scientist) & Susanne Veit (social psychologist)

*WZB-Project 'Against Elites, Against Outsiders: Sources of Democracy Critique,
Immigration Critique, and Right-Wing Populism'*

Call for
Applications

In recent years, research on populism has flourished in response to the increasing success of (so-called) populist parties. Existing studies cover a broad spectrum of approaches, with most studies aiming at explaining the mechanisms behind the rise of populism. The focus of populism research is increasingly shifting towards the specific attitudes that are present in society and addressed by populist political actors. However, with respect to the origins of these populist attitudes, research is disorganized and sometimes conflicting – especially between scientific disciplines but also between different theoretical approaches in one and the same discipline. Some studies examine the effect of individual dispositions, traits, and ideologies (e.g. economic deprivation, personality, authoritarianism, or system justification) while others highlight the role of successful communication strategies by populist actors – thereby often putting a stronger emphasis on the idea of populist attitude activation than on populist attitude formation. A different perspective focuses on the consequences of shifts in society and values – often associated with globalization and post-materialism – while political science research links populist attitudes to (perceived) problems of representation. Although all these perspectives have their merits, none of them alone seems to be able to sufficiently explain the role of populist attitudes. Among other things, one reason for this shortcoming is the lack of scientific exchange across disciplines.



Call for Applications

In an attempt to foster more exchange between these different perspectives, we invite 15-20 researchers from various disciplines to discuss their empirical research on populist attitudes. The interdisciplinary small-group meeting, “Populist attitudes: Sources, Formation, Activation and Correlates,” aims to stimulate dialogue between researchers from different disciplines and to inspire thinking about more comprehensive avenues of research on one of the most important topics in current times. While not constituting an exhaustive list, **key questions** addressed by the presentations and discussions could be:

- Which causes of populist attitudes are discussed in different disciplines, and can theorized effects be validated?
- Are populist attitudes formed in particular current contexts or are they pre-existing and simply activated? How does either of the two processes work and why is this happening now?
- How are populist attitudes and their sources related to other important factors often driving populist party support, especially nationalism, authoritarianism, and socialism?
- Is there a commonality between left- and right-wing populism when looking at the populist attitudes?
- Are there relevant differences between countries or societal groups regarding all these different mechanisms?
- What are potential remedies to populist attitudes and what diminishes the relevance of populist attitudes?

We welcome **submissions** for oral presentations from a variety of different disciplines. Please send your application (300-word abstract with title, contact details, and your disciplinary background) by **15 July, 2019**, to populism.conference@wzb.eu. Travel costs and accommodation will be reimbursed for one author of each accepted proposal. We are also negotiating the possibility for an optional joint publication as a special issue in a peer-reviewed journal.

If you have any questions, please send an email to populism.conference@wzb.eu.