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on Extremism & Democracy

Newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy

e-Extreme Managing Editors

Fred Paxton, *University of Milan*

Patricia Rodi, *University of Edinburgh*

Book Review Liaison

Damla Keşkekci, *Scuola Normale Superiore*

E&D Steering Committee

Léonie de Jonge, *University of Groningen*

Daphne Halikiopoulou, *University of Reading*

Annika Werner, *Australian National University*

The *e-Extreme* is the newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on *Extremism & Democracy*. For any enquiries about the newsletter and book reviews, please contact the managing editors (extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com).

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STANDING GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear *e-Extreme* readers,

We hope you are well, wherever you may be.

The ECPR Standing Group on *Extremism & Democracy* now has an official Twitter account ([@ecpr_ed](https://twitter.com/ecpr_ed)) where you can follow us for the latest news and updates, calls for papers, and must-read publications.

Read on for the usual mix of announcements, reports, reviews and alerts to keep on top of all the recent developments related to ‘extremism and democracy’.

Please do get in touch with your contributions and ideas for the next issue in early 2023.

From all of us at *e-Extreme*, we wish you a relaxing break!

REGISTER AS AN E&D STANDING GROUP MEMBER

You can join the ECPR Standing Group on *Extremism & Democracy* always free of charge and at the click of a button, via the ECPR website (<https://ecpr.eu/Groups>). If you have not already done so, please register as a member so that our list is up to date and complete.

In order to join, you will need a MyECPR account, which we assume many of you will already have. If you do not have one, you can create an account in only a few minutes (and you need not be from an ECPR member institution to do so). If you are from a non-member institution, we will need to accept your application to join, so your membership status (which you can see via your MyECPR account, and on the Standing Group pages when you are logged in to MyECPR) will be ‘pending’ until you are accepted.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch!

CALL FOR REVIEWERS

e-Extreme is now offering scholars the opportunity to review articles! If you want to share your review of the latest published articles in the field of populism, extremism and radicalism and have it published in *e-Extreme*, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us via: extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com.

E&D ROUTLEDGE BOOK SERIES

The Routledge Book Series in *Extremism and Democracy*, which publishes work that lies within the Standing Group's academic scope, covers academic studies within the broad fields of 'extremism' and 'democracy', with volumes focusing on adjacent concepts such as populism, radicalism, and ideological/religious fundamentalism. These topics have been considered largely in isolation by scholars interested in the study of political parties, elections, social movements, activism, and radicalisation in democratic settings. Since its establishment in 1999, the series has encompassed both influential contributions to the discipline and informative accounts for public debate. Works will seek to problematise the role of extremism, broadly defined, within an ever-globalising world, and/or the way social and political actors can respond to these challenges without undermining democratic credentials.

The series was originally founded by Roger Eatwell (University of Bath) and Cas Mudde (University of Georgia) in 1999. The editorial team now comprises Caterina Froio (Sciences Po), Andrea L. P. Pirro (Scuola Normale Superiore), and Stijn van Kessel (Queen Mary University of London). The editors strongly encourage ideas or suggestions for new volumes in the book series, both from established academics and early career researchers.

To discuss any ideas or suggestions for new volumes in this book series, please contact the editors at: extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com.

KEEP US INFORMED

Please keep us informed of any upcoming conferences or workshops you are organising, and of any publication or funding opportunities that would be of interest to Standing Group members. We will post all details on our website. Similarly,

if you would like to write a report on a conference or workshop that you have organised and have this included in our newsletter, please do let us know.

Please, also tell us of any recent publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in the 'publications alert' section of our newsletter, and please get in touch if you would like to see a particular book (including your own) reviewed in *e-Extreme*, or if you would like to review a specific book yourself. We are always keen on receiving reviews from junior and senior scholars alike!

Finally, if you would like to get involved in the production of the newsletter, the development of our website, or any of the other activities of the Standing Group, please do get in touch. We are always very keen to involve more and more members in the running of the Standing Group!

UPCOMING EVENTS AND CALLS

Call for Papers: Leadership in European Radical Left Parties

A workshop on ‘Leadership in Radical Left Parties’ will take place on 5-6 June 2023 at the University of Glasgow. Full details of the workshop can be found [here on the E&D website](#). The deadline for paper proposals is 31 January 2023.

Please send your paper proposal to Myrto Tsakatika (Myrto.Tsakatika@glasgow.ac.uk), Luke March (L.March@ed.ac.uk) and Petar Bankov (Petar.Bankov@glasgow.ac.uk).

More calls and job opportunities

The E&D website is kept up to date with job opportunities and conference calls: <https://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/extremismanddemocracy/category/news/>.

If you have any announcements you would like to share, do send them our way.

BOOK REVIEWS

DANIEL MARTINEZ HOSANG, JOSEPH E. LOWNDES.

PRODUCERS, PARASITES, PATRIOTS: RACE AND THE NEW RIGHT-WING POLITICS OF PRECARIETY

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA PRESS, 2019. 220 PP. \$19.95. ISBN 1517903599

Ghita Bordieri

University of Genova, Italy

In the United States of America, a gradually increasing number of non-white activists are becoming leaders of far-right groups and sharing political spaces with white supremacists. Is this an indication that race might be becoming less relevant to the far-right in the USA? This book by Daniel Martinez HoSang and Joseph E. Lowndes explores how changing economic and political contexts have played a role in producing subtle but relevant shifts in racialized discourses in the USA.

Race remains crucial to explaining structural inequalities. Nevertheless, we must consider that race is a constructed category that can change its referent over time. The authors brilliantly describe how the new right-wing in the US include or exclude different sections of the population in order to adapt to a new context. This continuous rebuilding of race and class boundaries, while relying on a continuity with the past, is defined as "racial transposition".

The book revolves around the ideas of producerism, in which race and class discourses overlap. The right-wing draw a social distinction between, on the one hand, hard workers who are worthy of social protection and, on the other, those who are incapable of sustaining themselves and guilty of their own poor economic conditions. The creation of these racialized characters – the producer, the parasite, and the patriot— serves the purpose of naturalizing inequalities, and justifies a lack of social protection for the parasites. Yet unlike in the past, in the new right-wing politics of precarity the parasitic character is not only attributed to the black “welfare queens”, and the patriotic and productive characters are not only reserved for white heroes.

The authors show how different actors draw from producerist ideas to deploy a coherent new way of setting boundaries. They guide us through a fascinating tour across the US in an age of rising inequalities: the demonization of public

sector workers and unions, new forms of poverty among white Americans, multiculturalism in the far-right, participation of black politicians in conservative politics, and militia uprising against the state in Oregon. Across these diverse political situations it is possible to see various racial categories at work in unusual combinations.

When analysing these transformations, the authors consider the agency of the political actors involved in dynamic terms. The inclusion of non-traditional actors in right-wing politics is not described as merely an attempt by the movements to hide behind diversity. Black right-wing activists are not portrayed as being simply misled by charismatic white leaders or unaware of the role they play in conservative politics. The new right-wing transpose on public workers and the poor white population the same racialized discourses previously used to demonize non-whites. Political change results from the fragmentation and recombination of the politics and identity of right-wing movements, in which the activists merge pre-existing motives and ideas to adapt them to a new political and economic scenario.

The analysis in the book is well grounded in the historical context and structural inequalities. Two main aspects are considered. First, the concentration of economic power in the US, which since the 2009 crisis a new group of precarious citizens, across different races. Second, an increase of non-whites in positions of power that did not correspond to a collective overcoming of structural inequalities. Blacks in positions of power are glorified as lone heroes, contributing to the idea that racial uplifting can be reached individually. Thus, the possibility that “racial transposition” occurs is linked to changes in power dynamics that facilitate new political stances for right-wing activists. The authors focus less on understanding the degree to which the electorate accepts these stances as credible – an avenue that is opened up by the book for future research.

Although the book considers only the case of the US in which, for historical reasons, the issue of race is different and perhaps more relevant than in most of the European countries, the concept of producerism can be fruitfully applied to European contexts (as recently done, among others, by Ivaldi and Mazzoleni 2019; Rathgeb 2021). Producerism bridges the construction of strong and polarized in-groups and out-groups and the construction of a moral distinction between classes (see, i.e., Halewood 2022) to the positions of the so-called populist radical right on economic and social policies.

In their exploration of racial transposition in the US, the authors suggest a possible way to consider shifting patterns of exclusion and inclusion by European radical right actors. Has anti-southern discourse become less relevant for the right wing in Italy? Are some migrants targeted for recruitment by the far-right, described as “good and productive” in contrast to other “lazy” ones? Since more

and more women are in power in radical right parties, are the new conservatives increasingly gender-blind? “Producer, Parasite, Patriot” inspires interesting questions and suggests some useful tools to address them.

Ghita Bordieri is a PhD candidate in Social Sciences at the University of Genoa in Italy. Her doctoral work is an ethnographic research inside the Lega party, focusing on the processes of cultural and organizational transformations in local party sections. Together with Giovanni Zampieri and Matteo Bortolini, she recently edited: *G.A. Fine, Etnografia e Società* (Mimesis, 2021).

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- Rathgeb, P. (2020). Makers against takers: the socio-economic ideology and policy of the Austrian Freedom Party. *West European Politics*, 44(3), 635-660.

NILS RINGE AND LUCIO RENNÓ

POPULISTS AND THE PANDEMIC: HOW POPULISTS AROUND THE WORLD RESPONDED TO COVID-19

ROUTLEDGE, 2023. 320 PP. £24.49. ISBN 9781032051956

Vivian Vollbrecht
Bielefeld University, Germany

The COVID-19 pandemic not only entailed a global health crisis, but an economic and political crisis too. Its management fell onto the shoulders of politicians who had to balance economic worries, the safety and health of their citizens, as well as their liberties, while trying to profit from these measures politically. The crisis became both an opportunity and a threat to populist parties and leaders around the world. Populists, whose rhetoric and goals build on crisis as a rallying opportunity, might be expected to benefit from such a situation – but what if they are the ones in charge of battling this unusual enemy?

This topic is targeted by Ringe and Rennó (2023) in their book. Emerging from a series of lectures, it shows how twenty-two countries around the world reacted to the exogenous impact of the COVID-19 crisis. What these countries

have in common is that they either have a populist party in government, a populist (authoritarian) leader, or a populist party in the opposition. To distinguish these parties and leaders as populist, authors use Mudde and Kaltwasser's "thin-centered ideology" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017: 6) definition, which involves the construction of opposing groups such as "the people" and "the elites". The authors' goal is to find out how these populists actors reacted to the crisis and why their reactions varied. Factors related to the political, electoral, and party system, the government type, state capacity and political economy are analysed to compare populist responses. Using content analysis, as well as statistical analysis, the authors showcase changes throughout the pandemic and factor in things like the closeness to new elections, to explain why these actors reacted as they did. These chapters follow a similar structure, as they first describe the political situation of the country, how it experienced the crises, what measures were taken and how these measures fall into the populist spectrum. For the conclusion, the authors also present a survey they conducted with the academic experts for each country case.

The case studies in the book first focus on a group of eight democratic countries that had populist parties in government during the pandemic. Here the populists could not use the pandemic solely as a crisis to perform, they also had to govern through it. The next group of countries in focus are those governed by populist leaders, under conditions of a backlash against democracy. The last group are the democratic countries with one or more populist parties in opposition. These parties were able to criticize the governments more freely which facilitated a better crisis performance, without the pressure to govern successfully. Overall, these chapters give a short, yet insightful look into how the countries were impacted by the pandemic and how populist parties reacted.

Finally, through a comparative study, the authors use all the case studies and an expert survey to assess the similarities and differences between the responses and their mitigating factors. The survey also addresses changes over time. This allows them to demonstrate how populists changed their style as the pandemic continued, with increasing knowledge about the virus and the adaptation of measures in response. One important finding here is that all populists used "the people" in their responses to the pandemic, but only those in opposition could further connect the crisis to their usual topics. When it comes to the management of the crisis, it is surprising to find that a majority of populists supported measures such as vaccines, media campaigns, and mask wearing. Only substantial lockdowns were met with major opposition. Analysis of the rhetoric and practices by populists show that many used the pandemic as a chance to gain more power. This particularly happened in non-democratic countries and declining democracies. While many populists downplayed COVID-19 (especially later in the pandemic), only a few actively denied the existence of the virus or

offered alternative treatments, such as Ivermectin in the USA or religious practices in Tanzania. Still, many of the populists in power managed the pandemic quite well, with only a few radical exceptions.

In general, the book gives a good overview and empirical basis for understanding the many different responses to the pandemic from populists. There are many new insights gained, in particular thanks to the comparative nature of the study which helps to understand the reasons behind these different reactions. That being said, the use of Mudde and Kaltwasser's definition of populist can be a little vague, and even the authors agree that not all the presented cases are clear-cut populists. Moreover, it would have been worthwhile for the expert survey to distinguish between pandemic-related measures in terms of their voluntary and mandatory character. As many chapters mention, actors were not necessarily against the measures themselves, but about them being mandatory. The book is a good start for research into the political changes that occurred during the pandemic. It will be interesting to see how the (populist) actors analysed will adapt now that the pandemic has lost some of its impact.

Vivian Vollbrecht is a graduate student of sociology at the University of Bielefeld in Germany. Her research interests lie in the fields of populist and radical politics, Gender and Queer studies, and qualitative research methods. She is currently working as a research assistant in the project "Rankings: A Comparative Perspective" at her home university.

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PUBLICATIONS ALERT

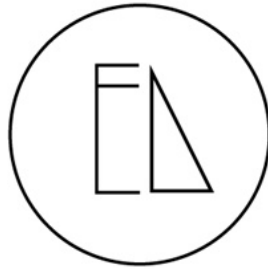
Our publication alert is based on a semi-automated search and can never be complete. Therefore, please tell us about any **recent** publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in our newsletter.

- Berens, S., & Deeg, F. Moving North and Coming Back: How Concerns about Different Types of Migrants Affect Social Policy Demands among Low- and High-Skilled Mexicans. *Politics & Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323292221130211>
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e-EXTREME MANAGING EDITORS

Fred Paxton, *University of Milan*
fred.paxton@unimi.it

Patricia Rodi, *University of Edinburgh*
p.rodie@ed.ac.uk

E&D STEERING COMMITTEE

Léonie de Jonge, *University of Groningen*
Daphne Halikiopoulou, *University of Reading*
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<http://standinggroups.ecpr.eu/extremismmanddemocracy/>
extremismmanddemocracy@gmail.com