

## Prologue

When introducing the third issue of the Interdisciplinary Journal of Populism, it is hard to avoid the temptation to underline once more the importance of Populist Studies in different scientific domains. Indeed, populism as a phenomenon that is situated at the crossroads of politics, psychology, and law, became a buzzword in contemporary social sciences; however, it is already impossible to observe political processes nowadays without taking populism into account.

In the present issue, eight papers are included that were received from scholars working in Portugal, United Kingdom, South Africa, Russia, Ireland, Spain, and Hungary. The authors come from different universities and subfields, having various backgrounds and methodological approaches. However, what unites the papers presented is their focus on populism as an inherent trait of post-modern politics, both Western and non-Western.

Now we'll look in more detail at the subjects dealt with in the third issue. The theoretical outlook comprises the discussion of definitions and temporal waves of populism, as well as of the discursive approach to left-wing populism developed by Ernesto Laclau. Francois Gilles de Pelichy looks at different understandings of the very term "populism" connected to various theories trying to explain the causes behind populist movements. He also underlines the importance of the notion of securitization to differentiate between spectral types of populism. Maximilian Wolf presents the arguments for paying more attention to the Lacanian concept of anxiety that is central to Ernesto Laclau's theoretical endeavors.

Upon looking at what populism in general is, how it can be classified and studied, the authors look at the various elements of populist narrative. In the present issue these are the interconnection between populism and human rights agenda and the difficult relationship between populist parties and feminism. Mia Wick points at the resurgence of the so-called "illiberal democracy" that was enhanced by the extraordinary situation of a COVID-19 pandemic. However, the (post)pandemic tide has, at the same time, a potential to change the existing state of affairs, and a targeted human rights advocacy might help these transformations to occur. Alfonso García Figueroa explores how the Spanish *Unidas Podemos* coalition has consequently "hijacked" the feminist agenda by appropriating its emotional accents, punitivism and attention to identitarian politics.

When theories in general are combined with narrative elements, there comes the overall electoral strategy of populist actors, where the theoretical approaches might be tested, and discursive peculiarities are exemplified. In the IJP third issue, the authors focus their attention on the populist leadership, online populist communication & social media strategies, incorporation of alt-right

subculture into political mainstream, and mainstream reactions to the populist challenge. Jean Noël Fernand Mercereau and Jorge Manuel de Almeida Gomes da Costa illustrate the transformation of a providential leader into a populist one by analyzing public statements of Riu Rio, the leader of Portugal's Social Democratic party. Ilya Lavrov investigates quantitatively the populist usage of social media platforms by the example of Donald Trump's Instagram activities. He indicates the main patterns and strategies of a politician's visual self-representation, while looking simultaneously at the audience's reaction to Trump's Internet behavior. In continuation of the American populist right case study, Balázs Böcskei and Szilvi Német delve into the "digital archaeology" of the US alt-right, extrapolating its imminent traits on the Hungarian political scene. They underline the democratization of technology and the Internet as the factors facilitating growth not only of social consensus culture, but also of populist and supremacist movements. Finally, by looking in detail into the case of the UK Independence Party, Sergei Shein analyzes strategic responses of the political "mainstream" to the right-wing populist challenge. He points at a gradual shift in the mainstream's behavior from excluding populist actors to including and accommodating their positions.

As Guest Editor of the issue, I sincerely hope that this combination of theoretical outlooks with empirical evidence would enrich our understanding of the vibrant phenomenon of populism, as well as provide some incentives for further research.

Dr. Petr Oskolkov