International conference

**CHANGES IN WORKING LIFE AND THE APPEAL OF RIGHT-WING POPULISM IN EUROPE**

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Working life in Europe has been subject to radical change in recent years, not only affecting people’s economic and social status but also the personal and social identities of individuals as well as political orientations. Based on recent research findings from the EU-funded project “Socio-economic change, individual reactions and the appeal of the extreme right” (SIREN) as well as the views of leading experts in both working-life research and the study of right-wing extremism and populism in Europe, the conference addresses these questions:

- How do people cope with the impact of the transformation of work and employment?
- What strategies do they develop to come to terms with the growing insecurity in working life?
- What are the political reverberations of recent transformations of the labour market?
- Is there an interplay between these transformations and the growing support for right-wing populist and -extremist parties and movements that Europe has experienced in recent years?

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ABSTRACTS

Gabrielle Balazs, Jean-Pierre Faguer, and Pierre Rimbert

Widespread Competition and Political Conversions in France

Using interviews with inhabitants of previously steel-industry based areas that industrial restructuring has devastated and with employees of a multi-national computer company established in the “French Silicon Valley”, this contribution provides a description of how working and living conditions in France have deteriorated, first for the working classes and second – because of economic crisis getting worse – for the skilled middle classes, and how this entails the social downgrading of a whole part of the wage-earning population. The contribution attempts to explain the processes that shape representations and the political involvement of individuals who suffer from social and economic insecurity.

Christoph Butterwegge

From the welfare state to the national competition state – and possible counterstrategies

What is currently on the political agenda of many Western industrial countries is not as much less state but a different state. Rather than the liquidation of the welfare state, it is about its reorganisation along neoliberal lines based on a reduction of benefits and the re-individualisation of social risk. The welfare state is being turned into a “nationally competitive state”, with policies designed to foster the economic competitiveness of the “own” country in a global market. Social welfare no longer has any intrinsic value. According to the neoliberal logic of competitive nationalism, welfare must be subjected to political and economic interests. The privatisation of public services, far-reaching deregulation of social security provisions and the increasing flexibilisation of employment thus do not result from economic necessity but the rationale of powerful interest groups. At the same time globalisation is more than purely ideological, as it calls for alternative democratic and social concepts that so far have not been sufficiently discussed.
Starting from the results of the qualitative research and the review of the literature, a telephone survey was carried out in early summer of 2003 among about 5,800 employed respondents of the SIREN countries: Austria, Belgium (Flanders only), Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and (the three regions of) Switzerland.

First, we discuss the experienced socio-economic changes. Overall, no clear trend is apparent: workers perceive some negative changes (e.g., an increase of workload, a slight decline in job security), but also some positive changes (an increase in autonomy and income). The evaluation of the actual situation also reveals mixed findings: whereas (on average) respondents experience little job insecurity and evaluate their income in a positive way, most of them also feel subjectively deprived. Some differences according to background characteristics will be discussed. Second, we focus on two aspects of right-wing extremism. First, five attitudes assessed as relevant for the “receptiveness” for right-wing extremism were analysed: prejudice against immigrants, chauvinism (an aspect of nationalism), authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and political powerlessness. Next, the evaluation of the national extreme right-wing party was measured (“affinity” towards right-wing extremism). Differences according to background characteristics are reported, and the association between the receptiveness attitudes and the evaluation of an extreme right-wing party is analysed. The latter is strongly associated with prejudice against immigrants, and to a lesser degree with authoritarianism. Chauvinism (nationalism), political powerlessness, and a social dominance orientation are less important.

Finally, the analysis of the link between socio-economic change and right-wing extremism is reported, and the role of social identification processes in this is highlighted. The analysis reveals the presence of two main psychological routes leading to a preference for a right-wing extremist party. In the first (“winners”) route, people perceiving a positive change in their job conditions and expressing a strong identification with their organisation, develop a high social dominance orientation. This, in turn, strengthens a specific set of extreme right-wing attitudes (chauvinism, prejudice against immigrants and authoritarianism). These attitudes foster the preference for an extreme right-wing party. In the second (“losers”) route, people perceiving a negative change in their job conditions develop a strong feeling of deprivation. If combined with distrust in politics, this feeling also leads to the preference for a right-wing extremist party. Typologies of workers who are more likely to follow one or the other route to right-wing extremism are described.
Yves De Weerdt and Hans De Witte

The public – private divide and receptiveness to right-wing extremism in Flanders

The results of the qualitative analyses suggested some differences between workers in the public and the private sector. Regarding changes in their job conditions, it seemed that there was still room for rationalization and intensification of work in the public sector. Workers in the public sector realized that they probably had to work harder (i.e. increase in workload) or in a different way, if their (state-owned) enterprise was to maintain a competitive position in an increasingly broadening European market. The workers in the private sector had always experienced such an economic environment. As a consequence, they perceive rationalization as a continuous – though intensified – process. Due to the already high workload, however, they only perceived little room for a further increase in work pressure. We can also assume that workers in both sectors exhibit different political attitudes, because their relationship with the government is quite different. For workers in the public sector, the government is their employer. As a consequence, a liberal government promoting privatisation of state enterprises and giving financial impulses to private companies, will probably receive a different appreciation from workers in the public sector compared to workers in the private sector.

In this contribution we will further explore the public-private divide in relation to three topics: (a) the perception of socio-economic change, (b) extreme right-wing receptiveness and voting intentions, and (c) the relationship between both series of variables. We will do so on the basis of both the qualitative and the quantitative (survey) data that were gathered in this part of Belgium. Results from the large-scale survey do indeed indicate that there are significant differences between workers from the public and private sector on a number of variables, such as changes in the amount of work, increase in job security, perception of current job insecurity, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and political powerlessness.

Caspar Einem

Possibilities for a social Europe

At least two aspects are central to the development of a social Europe:

- the new constitution for the European Union, which, by June 17, 2004, will either have been agreed on or failed. The European Constitution shall, and will, tackle the structural deficit that, at present, it is mainly national interests that are being negotiated. It will do so by giving the citizens of Europe the last word through the European Parliament they elect.
- and committed political work that helps the EU to develop from an economic organisation into a political instrument in the interest of its citizens. This Europe will be a social Europe if it concerns itself with the life interests of its citizens: peace;
employment providing sufficient income to live on; social security and non-
discriminatory access to all services of general interest; a healthy environment.

From today’s perspective both have excellent chances.

Peter Fleissner

Xenophobe attitudes towards migrants and minorities in the enlarged
European Union

Attitudes towards migrants and refugees in the “old” and the “new” member states of the European Union are compared with each other. Besides dealing with the usual socio-economic and demographic variables there is a focus on the relationship between xenophobic/xenophilic attitudes and the self-placement of the interviewees on a political left-right scale. As a – not really surprising – result, people are the more reluctant to accept migrants the more they see themselves as right-wingers. But also on the utmost left one can find increased values of intolerance against migrants. In the four new member states there are smaller levels of acceptance of migrants than in the traditional members of the EU (France not included). In general refugees are preferred to immigrants. The presentation uses the results of the European Social Survey of 2002/2003, covering 14 “old” member states of the European Union (without France) and four accession states. The dataset was published on the Internet this spring.

Gudrun Hentges, Jörg Flecker, and Gabrielle Balazs

Right-wing populist trends in Europe: Findings of the qualitative SIREN research

In recent years right-wing populist parties and movements were able to attain remarkable success at elections in (almost) all European countries. The interdisciplinary and comparative research project SIREN investigated these developments in Austria, Belgium/Flanders, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Switzerland. In these countries a total sum of approximately 300 qualitative interviews with employees of different sectors were carried out and analysed. When gaining and analysing data the main focus were the subjective perceptions and individual reactions to changes in working life, their assessment and political interpretation.

This contribution intends to present the central results of the qualitative project phase. In a first step the methodical approach of the project partners will be sketched. The main part of the contribution will be structured as follows: First the subjective perceptions of the changes in working life will be presented, second the differing political interpretation patterns and manners of coping. Finally, taking some of the typologies brought out of the qualitative analyses, it will be illustrated under what conditions and how socio-economic change can lead to right-wing extremist orientations.
Ortrun Gauper

Another Europe is possible – Pathways towards a social, job-creating Europe

A more competitive Europe needs a different economic policy

The past years have been characterised by poor economic growth within the European Union. Today approx. 13m people in the EU are unemployed. In order to revive the economy, policies rather one-sidedly relied on structural reforms, liberalisation and a stable Euro. These policies have led to Europe considerable fall behind the US over the past decade.

Full employment and social cohesion within an enlarged European Union

A regulation of economic policy and stable growth rates are the prerequisites for social security and adequate employment. Work is the best form of protection against social exclusion and poverty. Unemployment is a waste of knowledge and impairs people’s productivity.

A European social model requires different policies

Seen against the backdrop of EU enlargement, we need minimum social standards in whose definition employees have a say in. The same is true for the design of social security systems, contractual autonomy and European company law (participation).

Europe badly needs additional investments – especially into infrastructure, education and further training measures to modernise its economy. An improved coordination of tax policies in member states, rather than national competition, is also required.

It is the social question that determines the future of Europe and not the polarisation of winners of losers in a free play of market forces.

Sabine Kirschenhofer, Jörg Flecker, Manfred Krenn, and Ulrike Papouschek

Variants of right-wing populist attraction in Austria

The starting point for the construction of the types to be presented were right-wing populist orientations against the background of the subjective perception and interpretation of changes in the world of work. In the course of analyzing the qualitative interviews a diversity of constellations of attraction were discovered, which on the one hand mirrors the changeability and inconsistency of right-wing populist rhetoric, aims and objectives, but on the other hand also shows that regarding social milieu the widely diverse attraction can only be understood within the context of a society shaped by neoliberal capitalism, whose Social-Darwinist norms give impetus to right-wing populist currents. Within the Austrian SIREN-interviews five variants or types of right-wing populist attraction were constructed that can be differentiated via the following elements: different ideological elements the interviewees are responding to, social
milieus (family and social background as well as current life situation) including their concrete experiences with changes in the working world as well as gender and thereby differing life contexts and experiences of discrimination.

Michaela Köttig

**Female adolescents and young women in the context of right-wing-extremism in the Federal Republic of Germany – a qualitative study by biographical case reconstructions**

Since the beginning of the Nineties, alarming images from the Federal Republic of Germany have been going around the world: pictures of right-wing teenagers raiding homes of refugees and attacking foreigners; brutal attacks, frequently with fatal results. By now, independent sources have registered about 100 fatal incidents of right-wing violence. Media and also academic research reports on these events have focused exclusively on male youths, so the impression arose that girls and women aren’t involved in the right-wing scene. Following the media, authorities and researchers, girls and women with this background are not seen as actively contributing, as they are not as frequently involved in violence, compared to boys or men. However, this widely held view is specific to an orientation which diminishes female participation in right-wing extremism, leading to a misinterpretation and trivialization of their actual involvement. The involvement of girls and young women in the right-wing scene will be dealt with here.

In this presentation I will introduce a biographical study on the participation of girls and young women in the right-wing scene of the Federal Republic of Germany. Using a narrative approach the interviewees are invited to tell their life stories and their family histories. Interviews are analysed according to the method of biographical case reconstruction; the biographical themes and family attributions and assignments that foster an attraction to right-wing values are reconstructed. On the basis of case reconstructions and a contrastive comparison the empirical findings come to the conclusion that the right-wing orientation and action reservoir of these girls and young women, which is essentially produced by the intergenerational transmission of ‘unsolved’ family problems, are rooted in the National Socialist era. Furthermore, there appears to be an interdependence between the familial and biographical experiences and the themes of their right-wing orientation these girls and women are attracted to. I will explain the results of the study by an empirical example. The presentation focuses on the socio-economic changes for the eastern German interviewees after 1989.
Malte Meyer and Gudrun Hentges

“It’s an enormous amount of pressure which is coming from above...” – Changes in the world of work and right-wing populism in Germany

The public debate on the social origins of right-wing extremist attitudes has so far focused primarily on those people who considered themselves as losers in the so-called modernisation processes. Qualitative research, however, can demonstrate that the respective interrelations are far more complicated. Right-wing extremist currents in their overt as well as in their more subtle expressions address conformist and rebellious moods at the same time, and appeal to people from various social milieus and political factions. Thus the neo-liberal constellation of these different social forces – chiefly legitimated in terms of competitive nationalism – has to be examined to understand its right-wing extremist implications.

Patrizia Milesi and Patrizia Catellani

Two psychological routes to right-wing extremism: How Italian workers cope with change

Qualitative interview analyses of a sample of Italian workers shows how change in work conditions, perceived either positively or negatively, may lead people to develop extreme right-wing attitudes. Two different psychological routes leading to right-wing extremism are highlighted, according to whether the change people have been experiencing at work is perceived as positive or negative. In both routes, identification processes appear to play a relevant mediating role. In particular, few possibilities of identification with meaningful social categories (e.g. group-work) appears to increase workers’ insecurity and, as a consequence, the development of ethnocentric and authoritarian attitudes.

Cas Mudde

The Study of the Extreme Right: Looking Back and Ahead

Over the past two decades, the Extreme Right has become one of the most studied topics in the social sciences in general, and political science in particular. Unfortunately, the study of the Extreme Right so far excels mainly in quantity rather than quality. There is a huge literature, but within it there are great disparities. Consequently, much needs to be done. The vast majority of existing studies concern only a few topics: most notable, Extreme Right political parties, their voters, and studies in the tradition of ‘the authoritarian personality.’ Additionally, many studies present (rather than test) one grand theory, i.e. variations of the modernization theory (e.g. globalization, post-industrialism), in which right-wing extremism is the ideological defence mechanism of “modernisation losers”. In terms of methodology and data the quality and variety is
disappointing too: most studies are descriptive and non-comparative, using secondary sources (e.g. general elections studies and surveys). Finally, in terms of geographical scope, the bulk of studies focus exclusively on Western Europe or a few countries in Western Europe (Austria, Germany, France).

What needs to be done? There are at least five major contributions to be made: conceptualization, categorization, explanation, differentiation, and focus. First of all, far more attention and elaboration needs to be given to terminology, definitions, and operationalisations. Second, we have to construct good methods and indicators to categorize right-wing extremists? In other words, who and what are we talking about? Third, we need to develop clear hypotheses to test explanations of Extreme Right success and failure. This means that we need more hypothesis-generating, but also hypothesis-testing studies. Fourth, we need more differentiation in the level of analysis, i.e. at the micro-, meso-, and macro-level. Fifth, we need a far broader range of topics and foci. For example, we should not just study the successful political parties, but also the non-successful ones, non-party organizations and sub-cultures, and individual ‘right-wing extremists.’ More attention should be paid to the right-wing extremist actors themselves. Finally, we need a broader range of approaches. More specifically, research should be more comparative, but less normative. Moreover, there should be more integration of research from other (social) sciences.

Francesca Poglia Mileti and Fabrice Plomb

Individual expressions of right wing extremism: Understanding the affinity to radical populism in observing the changes in the work field – the case of Switzerland

This contribution aims at presenting a variety of individual expressions of right-wing populism and at discussing their link with the changes affecting the work system. The individual appropriation of right-wing extremist ideology is part of the process of “generalisation” and “normalisation” of what is today called radical right-wing populism. While numerous theories try to explain the causes of this phenomenon, theoretical approaches are rare that explore these processes at the individual level and provide empirical data to support them. We will show that radical discourses expressed by individuals are embedded in these people’s “political subjectivity”, i.e. the way in which they explain the social world for themselves and how it should be. This generic concept comprises political subjects as well as all kinds of activities, attitudes and social relations of everyday life. For working people political subjectivity is strongly related to the way they are linked to their work and the meaning they attach to it. If the workfield is subjected to far-reaching change – as has been the case over the past ten years – “political subjectivity” is affected and consequently the way people explain the changing society.

Our attempt to provide an explanation of individual affinity to radical populism in integrating working conditions is based on the study of the Swiss case. Following
developments in other European countries, Switzerland has seen a dramatic rise in support of what observers call right-wing (radical) populism. Specifically, this refers to the success of the Swiss People’s Party in the national elections of October 2003, and the election – for the first time – of a second representative of the SVP in the seven-member Federal Council: Christoph Blocher – one of its radical leaders defending neo-liberal economy, the autonomy of Switzerland towards Europe and anti-immigrant policies. Rather than focusing on a political approach to the phenomenon (which is relatively well-researched) or attempting to find an answer to the “why” or the “who” questions (addressed by numerous researchers and theories), this contribution aims to describe processes that can make people attracted to extremist ideas in considering at once structural changes and individual experiences.

Franz Schultheis

The new spirit of capitalism and the depoliticization of the political

Populism is the opposite of politics. It is not analyses, points of view, arguments or reasoning that count but resentment. That is what makes it so hard to even enter into a dialogue with right-wing populism. The populisms of all shapes and sizes emerging – of all times – in the era of the “reflexive modernism” conjured up by post-modern theorists and of the formation of a Europe without borders raise the following question: Where do they derive their amazing potential? The SIREN research provides empirically sound answers to this Europe-wide societal question, answers from which, with all due caution, conclusions can and must be drawn.

The moment of populism arises when politics abdicates. A lot speaks for Pierre Bourdieu’s thesis presented on the occasion of an anti-Haider demonstration here in Vienna on 31 March 2000, i.e. that right-wing populism can be understood as a direct consequence of a depoliticization of the political. Following on from this idea, one might say that neoliberalism’s road to victory, which began in the 1980s and which has seen a massive increase since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, has directly resulted in a profound and sustained shock dealt to the political plausibility structures of European democracies. The neoliberal worldview based on a blind belief in market forces, unrestrained utilitarianism and universal competition has completely done away with the historical compromise achieved in a laborious collective learning process since the 19th century: i.e. the chance for everyone to partake in economic and social achievements. It calls for and fosters the withdrawal of the state from its key function as a guarantor of justice in social distribution and thus makes the status of the worker – hitherto guaranteed by labour and social rights – increasingly precarious by allowing precarious – and up to now atypical – employment to gradually become normal.

Faced with a massive growth in insecurity and uncertainty about their status and their status quo, and at the same time deprived of traditional forms of protection and solidarity, today’s workers are no longer the “children of freedom” (Beck) but have become “orphans of a halved modernity”, whose disorientation, powerlessness,
existential fear and fear of the future make them easy prey for demagogues. This contribution wants to shed light on the ideology of the neoliberal worldview and to address the question to what extent neoliberalism isn’t populist in itself?

**Guy Standing**

**Economic Insecurities in a Great Transformation**

This contribution will highlight the aspects of globalisation that have created great economic insecurities, the forms that the economic insecurities have taken and the failure of regulations, social protection and distribution policies to address them or provide necessary bases of social solidarity, in which the emerging global system can function equitably and well.

**Eva Thoft and Edvin Grinderslev**

**The Welfare state under pressure: The Danish Case**

The contribution will comprise the following elements:

The abandoned workers and citizens: Some of the accounts given by our research support the thesis that changes in working conditions have a marginalizing effect. A contributory factor appears to be whether one feels protected and supported by social institutions in relation to the negative consequences of changes. Those who express pronounced xenophobic-populist attitudes often say they feel let down by unions, the workplace or other elements of the system.

Privatisation and rationalisation in the public sector – the employee perspective: In the public bus transport sector changes are predominantly considered to have been bad, since they led to increased work pressure and fewer benefits. In the home care sector, the predominant feeling is that the changes have generally been for the worse, resulting in increased pressure and poorer services for the elderly and vulnerable.

Changes in the welfare state – the citizen perspective: There is widespread concern among people about the state of the welfare system. Several feel that it is not working, at least not in the sector of health service and care for the elderly. The degree to which the system is perceived to be fair varies. Crime and immigration are mentioned also as arenas of significant change in society. Some focus on the costs of immigration, others on the failure of integration measures.
András Tóth and István Grajczjar

Contrasting routes towards right-wing extremism and the importance of working life: the Hungarian case

The Hungarian situation is unique in the group of countries covered by the SIREN project. As opposed to the relatively peaceful post-war development of Western European countries, Hungary has had a very different history due to its communist legacy. Probably no other country in the SIREN project has experienced similar political, societal and economic shifts in the past decade, or even in the last fifty years. Hence in no other country in the SIREN project a similar status inconsistency can be observed.

Based on the qualitative interviews, an interpretative model has been constructed of the influences on the degree of attraction to right-wing extremism, which takes into account both the historical aspects and the influence of current socio-economic changes. In this interpretative scheme the political socialization in the family plays a decisive role in shaping one’s basic political attitudes. Nonetheless, personal life history, career path, and the perception of one’s current social and employment status also influence political beliefs and voting behaviour. The interviews suggested that the (threat of) decline in living standards and precariousness is reinforcing or mobilizing prejudices that might have been acquired during the family socialization phase. Frustration and the consequent reinforcement and mobilization of prejudices might lead to voting for a right-wing extremist party. The qualitative survey further cleared the role of the world of work in becoming attracted to the siren songs of right-wing extremist parties. Three distinct groups of attractedness emerged: a) A group of people with authoritarian and nationalist views, but with a strong attachment to their workplaces and to their communities. People belonging to this group are typically older blue collar workers. b) A group of people with authoritarian and strong anti-immigrant views, who are feeling politically powerless and who do not feel attached to their workplaces and to their communities. People belonging to this group are typically younger blue-collar workers. c) A group of young white-collar and service sector employees, whose economic conditions are average, but who do not find their place in the society. They do not – like the people of the second group – feel politically powerless, but they don't trust politics and politicians. Their workplace experiences are contributing to their anomie: on the one hand they feel that their job security is good and their autonomy is increased, on the other hand they are increasingly suffering from stress and do not feel committed towards their workplaces. These people typically long for order in society, which would re-establish cultural integrity.
Asbjørn Wahl

The brutalisation of work: The breakdown of the social pact and its political consequences for the labour movement

The post-W.W.II period was characterised by the historic compromise between labour and capital. On one hand, this resulted in great social, economic and democratic progress. The welfare state was developed and working conditions were gradually improved. On the other hand, the social pact between labour and capital also contributed to the depolitisation and deradicalisation of the labour movement. The historic role of the social democratic parties became to administer this social compromise.

In most of the labour movement the welfare economy was understood as a “capitalism without crises”, which consistently developed to the benefit of everybody. However, the deep economic crises of the 1970s, combined with the deradicalisation of the labour movement, resulted in an offensive from capitalist interests, who gradually withdrew from the social pact and started to attack labour laws, agreements and power positions which were won during the welfare economy.

The trade union and labour movement were taken by surprise by this development. The shift from consensus to confrontation on the side of capital was incomprehensible within the consensus-oriented policy of the labour movement. This therefore led to a political and ideological crisis in the social democratic parties and a move towards neo-liberalism. The ideology of the social pact is able neither to explain this development nor to develop counter-strategies against it.

In this situation, a great part of the workers feels betrayed by their political representatives. It has become the role of the right-wing populist parties to exploit this discontent, political perplexity and increasing feeling of powerlessness. They offer simple solutions, and they canalise workers’ discontent against other social groups – such as “those who take our jobs” (immigrants), “those who are a burden on society” (lonely parents, people on welfare) and “those who impose ever higher taxes” or “pursue their own privileges” (politicians).

John Wrench

Discrimination of minorities and anti-discrimination policies in a European context

Recent evidence collected by the EUMC provides a picture of the continuing and widespread existence of racial and ethnic discrimination in employment in EU countries, showing the different ways that it can be identified and the various forms it takes. European trade unions are increasingly beginning to address this phenomenon, but there are national differences between trade unions within the EU on the character of their anti-discrimination activity. In this paper a comparison is made of trade unions...
in the UK and Denmark on the extent of their awareness of and activities against racism and discrimination in employment.

Anti-discrimination and equal opportunities activities can be categorised in the following way:

The *equal treatment approach*. With this approach it is believed that equal opportunities follows on from making sure that all are treated the same, regardless of ethnicity or colour. This is the classic ‘colour-blind’ approach.

The *level playing field* approach. This recognises the need to remove some unfair barriers (of, for example, racism or discrimination) which operate in the labour market, so that all have a fair chance at the opportunities which are available.

The *equal opportunities approach*. This aims for longer term proportional representation of minorities by a range of organisational measures, such as ethnic monitoring and targets. It might include ethnic record keeping, and elements of ‘positive action’ to overcome the effects of past inequalities.

The *equal outcome approach*. This uses quotas and ‘positive discrimination' to achieve a much shorter-term proportional representation of minorities. It is the most controversial type, seen by many to be in breach of natural justice.

British unions, after an initial “equal treatment” phase, moved on to the second phase in the 1970s and by the 1980s they had embraced the third phase of “equal opportunities” activities, with special policies and positive action. British unions have a wide range of anti-discrimination measures, and British union activists exhibit a strong awareness of issues of racism and discrimination and the need to combat them. In Denmark, the unions have held on much longer to an “equal treatment” view. Many Danish union activists explicitly reject British style anti-discrimination measures; cases of union support for members in discrimination cases are rare, and the general state of awareness of issues of anti-racism and anti-discrimination at work is relatively low. It is argued that one factor which inhibits stronger anti-discrimination action by Danish activists is the character of the dominant political discourse on immigration in Denmark, and in particular the influence of the populist and nationalist *Danskfolkparti*, which has a great deal of support amongst ordinary grass-roots union members.

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**Hans Georg Zilian**

**Equality Begins at Home**

The rise of right-wing populism was driven by well-documented developments within modern society – globalisation, international migration, unemployment, and the steadily deepening division between the affluent and the impoverished. All this is troublesome enough, but the success of “populists” at the ballot box in a variety of European countries compounds these difficulties. Commentators have succumbed to the temptation to accuse those voters who still take part in elections of falling victim to a simple-minded version of social reality and to endorsing equally simple-minded
political recipes. Stupidity and greed are, on this view, at the bottom of the kind of protest support for “populists” is taken to be.

The present paper will argue that one might equally well claim that the shoe is on the other foot. The cosmopolitans seem to be too stupid to appreciate that the realities of the labour-market seen from the point of view of people working at the bottom of the status-configuration look totally different from how they present themselves to the members of the elites, who have – for example – nothing to fear from large-scale immigration. The cosmopolitans are also fairly busy with improving their own position within modern society – they partake of the collapse of public-mindedness the last few decades have seen and are profiteers of the deepening social divisions they deplore but fail to do anything about. It is thus unclear why the cosmopolitans unthinkingly adopt the pose of the intellectually enlightened and the morally superior.

The cosmopolitans dedicated to left-wing liberalism and to Social Democracy have abandoned the struggle for a larger degree of equality within the developed societies, while pretending to work towards equality on an international scale (and occasionally actually going beyond pretence). This retreat from internal egalitarianism harbours the seeds of self-destruction. Solidarity and generosity have to be rooted in a sense of material and symbolic security. As long as we let the divisions within our own society deepen and broaden, the majority (or at least a biggish part) of the electorate will consist of people threatened by poverty and lacking a secure sense of self-esteem. Short of withdrawing the right to vote from them, there will be little that can be done to curb the attraction of “populism”. A higher degree of equality within our society will thus be a prerequisite of a progressive political strategy at the international level. If we are unable to secure support for an unconditional basic income for all the citizens of our society, the project of achieving this aim on a global scale will be doomed to failure, if not just laughable.