



NOVAMIGRA

NORMS AND VALUES IN THE
EUROPEAN MIGRATION AND REFUGEE CRISIS

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Report on webinar series on EU migration and refugee policy between populism and societal transformations

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Executive Summary

This report is summarizing the NOVAMIGRA Webinar Series on EU Migration and Refugee Policy Between Populism and Societal Transformation which is part of NOVAMIGRA's Work Package 2: Values in European Migration and Refugee Policy. The purpose of the Webinar series was to facilitate the understanding of the relation between the increasing populist tendencies in Europe and migration. The Webinars invited a few external experts along with a NOVAMIGRA member to introduce the concept of populism from different aspects and to shed light on the way populism was used, particularly how populist politicians, parties and movements instrumentalized migration to gain power.

1. Introduction

The NOVAMIGRA Webinar Series on EU Migration and Refugee Policy Between Populism and Societal Transformation was part of Work Package 2: Values in European migration and refugee policy which sought to provide a critical perspective for the understanding of the role of populism for Europe's migration and refugee policy. Nowadays populism is a complex phenomenon, also driven by dysfunctional elements of representative democracies and deep social tensions. The three main objectives of Work Package 2.2: *Studying Populism* are (1) the discourse analysis of various media which are related to political actors, (2) critical review and (re)interpretation of the literature on and contemporary theories of populism, and (3) the philosophical designation of the most characteristic features of populism to offer a common conceptual framework for the research project.

The Webinars allowed an easy overview of and a general insight into the research on populism and offered further directions for Work Package 2. The recordings invited people from various backgrounds to engage in the multifaceted elaboration of the topic while maintaining a scientific approach. Although the lectures represented a wide spectrum of methodologies ranging from critical theory to quantitative social scientific analysis, the presentations also addressed the phenomenon from a practical side in order to make the topic more accessible to the general public.

The Webinars connected the three objectives of the Work Package 2 since the intention of the recordings was to provide an overview of populism and to establish the link between its theoretical understanding and the specific empirical analyses. The Series consisted of five presentations including both external experts and a NOVAMIGRA member.

The lectures were recorded between 29th January and 26th February 2020. The broadcasts were aired weekly on Wednesdays at 16:00 CET. The Webinars were live-streamed publicly to create a chance for discussion at the end of each session. However, registration was required in advance for participation. The organizing Wesley team hired a professional team for the production which is specialized in Webinars. The live broadcasts used the Clickmeeting online platform and the recorded videos were uploaded onto YouTube. Currently all the recordings are openly available on the NOVAMIGRA website (https://novamigra.eu/index.php?c=70_media) as well as on the Wesley team's website developed specifically for the Webinars (<https://wesley.hu/novamigra-webinar/>). The latter website was part of the production services and was set up on Wesley College's website for the convenience of production management.

The Webinar Series explored populism as a political practice that exploits migration in order to influence people of their respective country and through them the European Union's migration policy. Two lectures engaged in a philosophical approach of the concept while the other four presentations (including a lecture with two presentations) introduced the populist practices and their consequences in France, Germany, and Hungary. With the invited presenters, we wanted to scrutinize how populism developed and took roots and gained power by fuelling fear of migration especially after the events of 2015.

2. Webinars

János Salamon: Mind over Matter – Populism: an appeal to numbers (29th January 2020)

According to its critics and embedded in a long philosophical tradition, democracy is the rule of the many, the rule of quantity over quality, of passions over reason, of matter over mind. In this talk the presenter explores the relationship between anti-intellectual/anti-elite populism and democracy. In his investigation he pays special attention to two paradoxical examples (the Battles of Salamis and Marathon). He concludes that populism comes from an aristocratic social system and as such it struggles to implement its ideal political thought within the system of the rule of the many. Translating it to our contemporary situation this means that populism subordinates culture (i.e. the tradition of cultivating reason) to social and historical justice, therefore populist politics itself eliminates the cultivation of reason, its sacredly safeguarded object while posing migration as the real threat to culture.

János Salamon is a professor of philosophy at McDaniel College, Budapest, a former associate professor of philosophy at Moholy-Nagy University of Arts and Design, Budapest. He taught at the Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, at St. Peter's College, Jersey City, New Jersey, and at the Diplomat School of the Foreign Service Institute, State Department, Washington D.C. His books include *A magány metafizikai struktúrája* (The Metaphysical Structure of Solitude), Budapest: Attraktor, 2003, and *A szív arisztokratikus szokásai* (The Aristocratic Habits of the Heart), Budapest: Kalligram, 2016.

Éva Gedő: What is populism? (5th February 2020)

The starting point of the lecture was that contemporary populist politics is characterized by a tendency to undisguised lying. Oxford Dictionaries designated "post-truth" as the Word of the Year in 2016. The concept of post-truth has been around for the past decade, but Oxford Dictionaries have witnessed a surge in usage in the year 2016 in the context of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. The idea of post-truth has also become a collocation of a particular noun, in the phrase post-truth politics. The presentation approached the problem of populism through individualism which is central to liberalism and the concept of post-truth. Furthermore, the presenter elaborated that populist parties (most notably Front National) made migration a permanent political topic posing it as a crisis. Populism is characterized by polarization and it deepens the idea of crisis in public opinion, therefore it draws strength and influence from presenting crisis as the predominant feature of our contemporary situation. The presentation pointed out that Hungarian populism frames migration as the highest threat to Hungary while there is no substantial ongoing migration in the country. Populist propaganda relies more on battering its own agenda on the public discourse rather than on facts.

Éva Gedő is an associate professor at the John Wesley Theological College. She wrote her Ph.D. thesis in philosophy at ELTE University, Budapest in 2006. Her thesis topic was the philosophical analysis of the decisionist political theory of Carl Schmitt. Her main research areas include German historicism, the political philosophy of the Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic, populism as political philosophy, theories of fascism. She taught for 12 years at the University of Miskolc, Faculty of Arts, now she is a lecturer at several universities such as ELTE, Károli Gáspár University, and the John Wesley Theological College. Éva Gedő is a member of the NOVAMIGRA team.

Éva Szénási and Éva Gedő: On the Relationship between migration and populism. A Comparative analysis of France and Germany (12th February 2020)

The two lectures, following one another, attempted to present and compare the policies of two right-wing populist parties in Western Europe: the Front National and the AfD. The webinar emphasized the analysis of the causes of the recent success of both parties. In this context, the webinar gave a brief overview of the histories of both right-wing radical parties and their current policies, the changes in their image, political language, and themes. The comparison is worthy of examination since the two parties, though keeping their distances from each other, have similar views on several issues, most notably migration. Both parties pose European integration and the presence and accommodation of immigrants and refugees as a threat to their respective national identity.

Éva Szénási is professor emeritus at the Faculty of Education at the University of Szeged. Her fields of study are the history of French political ideas and the analysis of some theoretical questions related to European integration. Her publications are primarily based on these topics. Her latest study – to be published in the History of contemporary France – is a deep dive into the history of French radical parties. She is also a translator from French. Between 1993 and 1994, she worked as a visiting professor at the Institute of Political Studies at the University of Lausanne. In 2000, she gave lectures at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris in the doctoral school studying post-communist countries. She is an editor of the Varietas Europaea book series at L'Harmattan-Hungary publishing house.

Endre Sík: Migration and xenophobia (19th February 2020)

This webinar explored how the Hungarian government framed the migration discourse and how the Fidesz-KDNP party coalition instrumentalized the refugee crisis as a „moral panic” button to increase the popularity of the government after its popularity decline 2014. The webinar showed the different anti-refugee governmental strategies of 2015 and 2016 such as the national consultation, the billboards, media and the referendum campaigns and analysed their impact on the xenophobic attitudes in the Hungarian society.

Endre Sík is an external researcher at the Centre for Social Sciences, Budapest, Institute for Sociology, and professor emeritus at ELTE, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Minority Studies, Budapest. His teaching experience includes 2003 – EU identity – Tomsk State University, Tomsk, 2005, 2006 – Sociology of Migration EIUC, Venice, 1996 – Second Economy in Post Communism, CEU, Prague, 1994 – The Sociology of the Informal Economy, Notre Dame University, and 1990 – Sociology of Organisation, University of Toronto. He has been a fellow of several research centres across Europe and a recipient of several research grants.

Attila Melegh: The rise of anti-migrant populism. The global context (26th February 2020)

The history of the population and migration policy and the radicalization of demographic nationalism can be understood as evolving within the era of globalization out of an interplay between demographic challenges and labour market challenges on a global, European and local level. On all these levels there are key factors operating due to neoliberal institutions, most importantly the freedom of capital to move and overrule and subordinate local social arrangements. This webinar looked at Hungary as an example.

Attila Melegh is a senior researcher at the Demographic Research Institute, Central Statistical Office, Budapest, and associate professor at the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy, Corvinus University, Budapest, as well as a professor at Tomori Pál College, Kalocsa. He is a recipient of several Academic Honors, Professorships and Awards. His books include: *On the East/West Slope. Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discourses on Central and Eastern Europe*. New York-Budapest, CEU Press, 2006.

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About NOVAMIGRA

Several, partly interconnected crises have profoundly challenged the European project in recent years. In particular, reactions to the arrival of 1.25 million refugees in 2015 called into question the idea(l) of a unified Europe. What is the impact of the so-called migration and refugee crisis on the normative foundations and values of the European Union? And what will the EU stand for in the future?

NOVAMIGRA studies these questions with a unique combination of social scientific analysis, legal and philosophical normative reconstruction and theory.

This project:

- Develops a precise descriptive and normative understanding of the current “value crisis”;
- Assesses possible evolutions of European values; and
- Considers Europe’s future in light of rights, norms and values that could contribute to overcoming the crises.

The project is funded with around 2.5 million Euros under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme for a period of three years.

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