

## **International Workshop**

# **Voters, elections and government participation on the Radical Left**

### **Left Radicalism Specialist Group at the Political Studies Association**

The electoral rise and subsequent fall of the radical left across the world in the past decade remains a topic of significant academic interest. The fluidity of radical victories, the success of some but not other radical left parties, the contemporary challenges of governing in capitalism from the left, merit scientific exploration and explanation. Key to understand these developments is to understand who supports or have supported these parties. Existing works on the matter remain rather outdated, scarce, or focused on a particular aspect, such as the voters' background, attitudes on specific policies, or their values. In the meantime, the existing votership has been joined by new comrades, aiding the electoral rise of radical left parties across the world, and has been left out by disillusioned and disenchanted supporters signalling their electoral decline. Moreover, contemporary investigations indicate two conflicting trends among the radical left votership: while some claim that these voters are among the most socially progressive in their respective societies, other reports suggest that radical left voters may be economically left-wing, but rather socially conservative. In addition, the working-class vote is fragmented but there is so far no clear picture of what drives this fragmentation, and there is also disagreement, arising from scientific perspective, as to whether the core bulk of radical left voters are derived from the middle or working classes. All these aspects reveal a lack of a general understanding of who these voters are and how demand-side and supply-side factors interact to produce the radical left 'electoral market' and shape any fluctuations therein. This workshop aims to respond to this gap by inviting papers looking at, among others, the profile of radical left voters (their background, their attitudes, their views), how has it changed since the electoral rise of these parties in the past decade and are what the current trends; who are the core voters (identifiers) of the radical left and what is the potential for radical left expansion, if any; how are radical left voters different from social democratic, Green, and potentially from protest and radical right voters; how does abstention affect the radical left in relation to other party families?

In parallel, the workshop will investigate elections and government experiences, either in isolation or in conjunction with studies of voter demand for radical left policies. The past decade saw the radical left across the world take an increasing government responsibility both at national and sub-national levels. For example, in Greece Syriza formed the first coalition government in Europe after a long period, where a radical left party was the main coalition partner. In the Czech Republic the communist party escaped its decade-old pariah status by providing parliamentary support for a minority government. Similar breakthroughs occurred at the sub-national level too: for example, Die Linke was not only the main party in the coalition government in Thuringia, but also was involved in the government of Bremen in West Germany; the Austrian communist party has sustained a strong electoral following while in government in Graz. Despite these developments, there is little systematic knowledge of the recent experiences of radical left participation in government that build

upon the fundamental work by Olsen, Koss, and Hough (2010) from about a decade ago. This panel aims to provide such a systematisation by inviting comparative and single-case papers on radical left participation in government across the world, especially in relation to the dynamics of electoral success or defeat. We would like to look into what these experiences were, what their effects on the radical left and wider society have been, and what the main lessons learned from them are. These considerations include questions of organisational adaptation or change before, during and after government participation. The workshop aims to include papers not only on the well-studied area of radical left participation in national governments but is also interested in the experiences of radical left parties in regional and local government, too. The area focus is not limited to any particular geographical region but seeks to highlight developments in Europe and Latin America especially, where parties of the broad socialist tradition and its derivatives have recently occupied executive office.

*Format:*

The workshop will be organised for one day online and will provide the space for an academic debate in which several scholars can present the most recent findings of their research. The workshop seeks to attract a mix of established scholars, early-career researchers and PhD students. To increase the exchange of ideas, each presenter will serve as a discussant for another paper. Each presenter will be allocated 45 minutes: 20 minutes to present the paper, 10 minutes for the discussant and 15 minutes for general discussion.

*Provisional date and time:*

10am-4pm, Friday, 14 January 2022, online

There is no participation fee. Authors should send a 200 word abstract with a title of their proposed paper, their name and affiliation. The address is [Petar.Bankov@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:Petar.Bankov@glasgow.ac.uk) or [charalambous.gi@unic.ac.cy](mailto:charalambous.gi@unic.ac.cy) and the deadline is 5 December 2021 (midnight). The organisers will inform the participants about the outcome of the selection process by 12 December.

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*On behalf of,*

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