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Abstract

Discursive framing of food security and agriculture in the European Union in light of growing interest for mitigating the effects of environmental degradation is a complex process. Economic hardships, which also significantly affected the state of agriculture, enabled political discourses of national populism to flourish as a prominent political framework for addressing a wide array of issues. Given the infringement of national populism in Hungarian politics, articulation and endorsement of 'illiberal democracy' as an answer to the crisis of liberalism, the ways in which these notions inform (and assemble) a secure and emancipated community with agriculture are becoming increasingly relevant. The ambiguous nature of populism allows for the employment of multifarious conceptualizations of "security", which are often boiled down to Securitization Theory approach: security as survival. On the contrary, populist discourse, in emphasizing the protection of national identity and national autonomy, tends to present security as a fundamental value of emancipated communities. The attempts to bring together nationalist and even xenophobic ideations with emancipation from the influence of the 'outsiders', invariably molds the public outlook on agriculture. This paper aims to define the differences in approaches to agriculture and security as ontologically and contextually bounded. By unpacking the concept of emancipation (i.e. Welsh School of Security Studies) through the application of critical discourse analysis, this research addresses the ways in which national populism as a political ideation utilizes the notion of food security to envisage a framework for sustainable agriculture. In order to discern the features of a national-populist approach to agriculture from liberal political options, political programs of populist parties (Jobbik, FIDESZ), and green liberal parties (LMP) will be scrutinized and compared. The results will then be utilized for engagement with the concept of emancipation, not only from the Welsh School perspective, but also in terms of evaluating the potential for an advancement of this notion in agricultural politics.

Introduction

Concerns about the production of safe food in the European Union are at the forefront of public interest due to their conflation with a plethora of prominent issues, such as the quality of natural environment and the concept of sustainable agriculture, and have necessitated adjustments to the overall political framework (Rigby, Caceres, 2001, McDonagh et al. 2009, Nugent 2003). While the status of farmers as the most knowledgeable caretakers of soil and the local environment has been diminished by emerging neoliberal monopolies (Bartulovic, Kozorog, 2014), European soil (if such a thing exists in the first place) became the subject of previously marginalized political ideations. One of these, national populism, has become the ideological anchor of the political system in Hungary, causing somewhat of a ‘political earthquake’ (Becker, 2010). However, the populist parties in Hungarian Parliament do not have a cohesive stance on many relevant issues, agriculture being one of them. When it comes to discourse, there is a field of contestation: on the one hand, liberal discourses of cosmopolitanism aim to present agriculture, particularly its ‘greener’ modalities, as a part of a global environmental movement (Barton, 2017); on the other, romantic ideations of cultivated homeland representing the essence of agrarian society, food and national security, are becoming more prominent (Boll, 2013). Political actors employing these competing framings present their views as emancipatory, the most relevant discursive frameworks on sustainable future and food sovereignty.

The fundamental questions about the relevance of any dichotomy can be brought down to two: first, are there two distinctive, uniform discourses that can be identified, and second, are there only two? Hence, the central issue of this inquiry is grasping how populist and non-populist parties frame the role of agriculture in their political programs through operationalizing the notion of security by conceptualizing the blurred but ubiquitous ideal of emancipation. To assess this problem, I will conduct critical discourse analysis of different party programs on food security (Jobbik and FIDESZ are populist parties, while Lehet Más a Politika (LMP) is a green liberal party) by applying the Emancipation Theory of Security (Welsh School of Security Studies) as well as Ingold (2002) and Blaser et. al (2013) s’ framework of political ontologies. As this analysis will show, the two major conclusions can be identified: i) populist approaches to emancipatory agriculture and food security and sovereignty are obscure and heterogeneous, and therefore not entirely solidified, and ii) the two (populist and liberal) approaches to agriculture overlap in many aspects, which presents a range of implications and new questions for understanding both populism and emancipation.

What, then, is populism?

Grasping the potentially incendiary, yet opaque notion of populism is a prerequisite for identifying parties or views as populist. The veil of ambiguity around the term has a lot to do with its latently political nature, ultimately seeking to avoid habitual political involvement by engaging in politics mainly in times of crises (Taggart 2001). Kornhauser (1959) and later Worsley (1969), argue that a fundamental feature of populism is in its denial of pluralism by emphasizing the homogeneity of society and adopting neo-colonial features. The manifestations of populist infringement are manifold, and the simplicity of Manichean politics – aimed at producing dichotomies and a particular sense of urgency - makes the term apt for different contexts. This indeterminacy of populism allows such conceptualizations to be present on the both ends of the political spectrum: both right and left-wing populisms resemble the discontinuity of the social, the lack of ‘fullness’ in a community (Laclau, 2005: 85). The existence of right-wing and left-wing populism, to some authors, is a proof that the concept cannot be seen as a component of a particular ideology (see Mudde, 2004), nor a movement, but instead as a political logic (Laclau, 2005). In practice, this view of populism is mostly interested in framings that political leaders generate through speeches and other forms of political expressions, and therefore the structural or ideological aspects of political parties are beyond the scope of this research? (Gidron, Bonkowski, 2013: 8). Seeing populism not as a fixed constellation, but as a series of discursive formations that create a logic, allows for tracking the incursions of its right-wing, authoritarian forms in diverse fields.

The populist critique of the present state of agriculture, in many ways congruent with environmentalism, is an appropriate example of such an intrusion. Its chameleonic quality enables it to take on the hue of the environment in which it occurs: for the purpose of this conceptual examination, that can be taken literally. The convergence of national populism and farming is embodied in the notion of agrarian populism as a feature of rural, modernized societies which was, until early 1980s, the core of populist phenomena (Canovan, 1981, Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). The process of blending social-economic doctrines with a strong nationalistic concern for the emancipation of the respective 'people' from under foreign domination (Ionescu, 1969) has been translated to contemporary issues of security and neoliberal capitalism.

On the other hand, a more “cosmopolitan” reflection on agriculture in a green polity, taken up by most of the green liberal parties, envisages organic farming as a global movement ultimately contributing to an enhanced vision of liberal democracy (Rigby, Caceres 2001). The political anchors of right-wing populism, rooted in a more identitarian, vividly contextual approach to politics (Betz 2009), imagine sustainable agriculture as a potential for a renaissance of this acclaimed agrarian history. Yet, the contextual differences are also one of the most fundamental hardships of defining populism, as it is impossible to unify the essence of the term which has sprung up at different spatial and temporal circumstances, making identification of patterns very difficult. Post-socialist countries have a profound agricultural past, and sustainable modes of farming in some of these countries dates further back in history (Romsics, 2002). This analysis will focus on Hungary, for several reasons: strong presence of populist parties (Jobbik and FIDESZ), profound history of both environmental degradation and agricultural devastation, a post-socialist political tradition, and a strong organic sector, among other reasons.

Theoretical framework and methodology

Assessing the ways in which populist parties attempt to discursively subjugate or include sustainable forms of agriculture in its political agenda, and how these framings differ from the approaches of other political parties, require the application of discourse analysis. In order to enable a theoretical base for the interpretation of the findings, I will engage with the Foucauldian understanding of discourse and the emancipation theory of security by Booth and Wyn Jones (Welsh School), in addition to the political ontologies which different discourses refer to and resemble. Moreover, by accentuating the processes of ‘producing knowledge’ on the environment and agriculture by political parties, this research reflects the relationship between different facets of populism and agriculture in Hungary.

Yet, what does engaging in Foucauldian critical discourse analysis actually entail? For Foucault (1998), discourse is a strategic situation which shapes the field of opportunities, and defines the locations of tension and struggle. Such an understanding of the term is closely related to his understanding of power, which is a dynamic interplay of non-egalitarian and mobile relations affecting our daily routines. Nothing can be done outside of power relations: there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of these relations. Hence, resistance can never be located outside of power. Discourse is both an “ensemble of statements”, (Foucault 1998: 100) and “discontinuity of segments” (Foucault, 1981), where statement is not solely confined to speech acts but to all the ‘arrangements’ concealed behind, such as the text, the architecture or the overall structure. Feindt and Oels (2005: 87) point out that this approach is interested in the production of knowledge, instead of merely looking at the language structure: making the constitution of subjectivities possible, or enabling the self-conceptualization of actors leading to a form of self-governance. Therefore, a Foucauldian perspective will enable us to focus on the ways in which both populist political parties facilitate the process of discursive creation of particular subjectivities, as well as delineating lines of exclusion and determining the accepted ‘truth’ in relation to their conceptualization of agriculture.

Foucauldian epistemological commitment to local knowledge enables the employment of discourse analysis in political programs of Jobbik, FIDESZ, and LMP. As this inquiry is not exclusively focusing on the way political parties lay out their programs, but rather attempting to influence and

engage with a more profound connection between the land and people, it is important to expand this Foucauldian framework with regard to particular understandings of nature-culture nexus, in order to set up an ontological and epistemological base of this analysis.

Ingold (1992) focuses on the more ontological dimension of what Foucauldian discursive formations entail – critical of nature-culture dichotomy, he asserts the process of ‘discovering’ as opposed to ‘constructing’ the outer world. This continuous exchange is not equal to a process of writing on a tabula rasa – the involvement of an individual in his/her environment is what constitutes both, but also the historical aspect, the ‘past activity’. Mario Blaser (2013: 543) accentuates the need for ‘multiple ontologies’, going beyond the ‘generalized assumptions that we are all modern and that the cultural differences that exist are between perspectives on one single reality “out there”, what constitutes an ontological conflict’. For farmers, this single reality can be related to the legal conditions of production – an overarching policy framework (such as the Common Agriculture Policy of the EU), leaving out a range of understandings related to the livelihoods. Blaser accepts the need for a nuanced assessment of the potential pitfalls occurring through homogenizing vast political and cultural realms – nonetheless, these practices do not need to be entirely self-coherent in order to constitute a particular *worlding*. This term should be distinguished from simply belonging: the two imply different practices and thus different ontological standpoints (belonging is rooted in nature-culture nexus, thus appropriating what Blaser envisages as ‘modern worlding’). While *multiculturalism* might be representing this ‘ontological bridge’, critics would point out that this concept serves as a ‘late-liberalism response to anticolonial challenging of liberal forms of government’ (Povinelli, 2011).

On the other hand, understanding how political parties assert ontological security (Giddens 1991, Mitzen 1996) with regard to farming is a challenging, and potentially impossible task. Because this analysis should serve as a precursor to instigator for a more complex research project, the findings will, regardless of the shortcomings, feed into a broader picture of the ways populist parties attempt to conflate with emancipatory agricultural politics.

For addressing the central research question stated in the introduction, this revised ontological framework in which a Foucauldian theory of discourse can be embedded seems to be missing an important point in engaging with emancipatory politics. The notion of (food) security enables such a linkage, as it is ingrained in both emancipatory discourses, and more broadly, in the collective memory of Hungarians (Illes, 2017). Illes asserts that Hungary’s long and complex history of invasions, ‘both from inside and outside’, empowers multifarious meanings of security at the very top of the political agenda. Thus, operationalizing security in any given context – in this case, of agriculture, enables an additional political benefit.

In order to look at the ways security is applied in light of sustainable agriculture, it is important to elucidate the development of this notion. The concept of *security* has come a long way since the 1980s, when it was equated with nation-state and military might in a Cold War-mindset. Emancipation theory, which emerged in the early 1990s, is one of the reformist, constructivist concepts (together with its counterpart, *securitization theory*) which aimed to widen and deepen the concept of security by focusing on different referent objects (i.e. what is to be protected): the environment, society, or the individual. Unlike securitization theory, which is generally more prone to identitarian populism (Lazaridis, Konsta, 2015), due to its dichotomist, Schmittian (friend-enemy, security-freedom) conceptualization of political and equating security with survival, emancipation theory visualizes the concept of security as ‘survival plus’, where the concept incorporates a range of values additional to physical safety: material well-being, cultural autonomy, access to safe food and water, but also i.e. jobs. Ken Booth (1991:319), arguably the most influential thinker and intellectual anchor of the emancipatory project, defined emancipation as ‘freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely chose to do’. The process of ‘inventing common humanity’ through the concept of human rights (Booth, 2005: 181-2), is dependent on participation (in Habermasian-deliberative terms) in *emancipatory communities*. However, this approach has been criticized as ambiguous and thus lacking both normative and analytical acuity. Johan Eriksson (1999: 319) regards emancipation as a ‘textbook

example of classic idealism.’ Other authors, such as Martin Shaw (1992:166-8), are concerned with the absence of an alternative for a statist approach which results in ‘failing to consider the realm of society.’ Simultaneously, Ayoob (1999: 127-9) accentuates the need to guard against the temptation to make the concept so broad and universal, as this would have practical implications for analysis, but also because it does not adequately acknowledge those situations in which emancipation was achieved without security and vice versa. Richard Wyn Jones, with Booth one of the leaders of this emancipatory project, signals the possibility for overbridging liberal individualism in Booth’s formulation through its focus on empirical, contextual cases. Joao Nunes (2012) attempts to overcome the apparent need for cosmopolitanism and universalism of emancipation theory by repoliticizing the concept itself.¹ Moreover, Nunes emphasizes the necessity of including a Foucauldian understanding of power in order to advance the Emancipation Theory. Hence, this revised theory of emancipation should be read as a contribution to the notion of security which is not only discursively constructed as mere survival, but a contextually-dependent term which focuses on individuals and communities free of external constraint.

This advanced concept of emancipation provides more analytical leverage than the concept of security under the *securitization* framework, as it enables focusing on the discursive patterns which are far broader than utilizing the concept of security merely as survival. In that sense, security as emancipation allows us to look at the ways in which both liberal and populist parties’ documents and speeches associate the need to enhance agricultural and agroecological practices with a particular understanding of security and self-sustainability.

The discursive components, the language of security (as emancipation) enables an assertion of political ontologies, important for conceptualizing the role of sustainable agriculture in securing the country’s future political pathways.

Sustainable agriculture, food security, and political parties: realizing emancipation

Given the theoretical framework laid out in the previous section, understanding the modalities through which political parties discursively frame sustainable agriculture through a particular assertion of security, a comparative analysis of the official party programs (Jobbik, FIDESZ, LMP, as well as official speeches and interviews) will expound on the ways in which parties envisage the future of agriculture.

Before analyzing the data, it is important to reflect on the choice of parties in this inquiry, and elaborate on omitting Hungarian Socialists (MSZP) and Christian Democrats as relevant parties in this inquiry. Even though the two parties have prominent members dealing with agricultural issues in the national and European Parliament (such as Tibor Szanyi for the MSZP), the explicit role of agriculture in a sustainable society (or the need for a “sustainable society” at all) is missing from their political program.

A Movement for Better Hungary (or shortly, Jobbik), has a history of making more apparent (and xenophobic) connections between Hungarian peasantry and a rudimentary, traditional notion of security, which is largely related to physical threats to the nation-state. In the wake of refugee crisis in early 2012, the mayors from the party in rural areas were organizing armed militias to contain and inspect potential ‘outsiders’ roaming around the fields, creating an image of a ‘peasant willing to protect his homeland from invaders’ (ObserversFrance). However, things have significantly changed in the last couple of years, and Jobbik has tried to refine its highly problematic reputation. Nowadays, its political program explicitly points out the need for invigorating the family farm as a dominant mode of land ownership and ‘healthy, home-grown food’ as a prerequisite to food security and national revitalization (Jobbik), providing a particular understanding of sustainability and the role of

¹ The main problem here, he argues, is the collapsing of reality into materiality under the disguise of ‘real issues’ and material existence of individuals – hence, the attempt to conjoin the material and political dimensions is vague, as we are left with political dimension flourishing from pre-political materiality.

Hungarian people. The aim of Jobbik is to establish a ‘close supervision for the purpose of market protection, in order to promote production of safe food manufactured from locally sourced GM- and additive-free’ (Jobbik). Resources such as land are to be protected: a particular language is applied in order to safeguard the ‘national treasure’, i.e. land and water. Land is a formative component of national culture and ultimately, national identity: ‘rural culture, with traditions dating back many centuries in history, is one of the central elements of Hungarian national identity’. Throughout the text, many dichotomies are implicitly or explicitly posited: on one hand, ‘home’ and ‘local’ are a counterforce to ‘foreign’ (even explicitly pointing to specific locations), ‘oligarch’, where a desired subject is constructed through what it does not belong to (exclusionary principle of identity, as explained in Brubaker, 1997).

The following passage called “Agriculture and land protection” aptly describes the role of organic farming in Jobbik’s program, and thus deserves to be quoted at length:

Most of our food industry was transferred to foreign ownership and got in decline. Today's Hungarian agriculture mainly puts out raw materials while we import most of the processed products...we categorically say NO to Hungary's "South Americanization" which would entail a system of large estates owned by oligarchs but employing very few people. We believe that the goal must be to achieve a family farm-based land ownership structure, promote sustainable modes of farming, and we are willing to confront even Brussels in this matter.

Even though security is explicitly omitted from this passage, it is clear that land and sustainable modes of farming should be protected from harmful influence of oligarchs or ‘outsiders’. However, emancipatory discourse on security, where the term itself includes not the explicit threat to survival, but an opportunity for self-fulfillment (in this case national revitalization), is still laid out in the nexus between people and the land; Lajos Kepli, Jobbik’s leading environmentalist, points out in his blog that the “Hungarian man, coming from a very particular countryside, slowly but surely becomes emancipated and finds his own function in this world, as a producer of safe, healthy, home-grown food” (Kepli, 2016). Such a statement implies a distinctive and somewhat recalcitrant worldings, although it is impossible to infer the underlying meaning from this particular text.

For Zoltan Magyar, Jobbik’s member in the Parliament’s Committee for Agriculture, strengthening organic and small farming means strengthening the Hungarian nation, and that the “homeland is to be protected from the harmful effects of GMO, as the agriculture on small, family farms presents the only possible way to restore power and autonomy of rural Hungary and its farmers.” (Jobbik). The ‘restoration’ of autonomy and power in Jobbik’s discourse on agriculture is a frequent theme: by mixing it up with contemporary topics, such as genetically-modified crops, the retreat to organic production on a small-scale means going back to the roots and to the long-lost acclaimed history of Hungarian state, which formally perished at The Grand Trianon Palace.

The political platform of FIDESZ is undoubtedly situated within the scope of populist politics (Murer, 2015, Wilkin, 2016). Victor Orban, FIDESZ’s leader and the Prime Minister, is known for his remarks on the nature of ‘illiberal democracy’, he has been proposing and fostering. To Orban, neoliberalism, as a Western European and North American ideology, is not to be entirely trusted because it places the market and the abstract individual before the culture and society in which it is to be embedded (Wilkin, 2013: 80). This (essentially anti-pluralist) stance has been operationalized through a hostility towards any form of opposition within the party, civil society, or other relevant actors. For the sake of electoral success, Orban’s image was carefully mediated to present him as a man of the people and of the countryside (Wilkin, 2013: 55). However, Zoltan Illes (2017), FIDESZ’s long-time member, claims that the party is not sufficiently addressing the issue of sustainable agriculture and/or organic farming. However, the fact that FIDESZ is the most influential party in the political system has a great impact on its accessibility to discourse on sustainability and organic agriculture. Unlike Jobbik, FIDESZ’s politicians do not assert a relationship between the agrarian strata and the soil which is to be cultivated. In fact, the political program of the party, “A Stronger Hungary”, does not mention sustainable agriculture or any terms related to environmentally-friendly farming, but instead states that

“robust support must be given to the representation of the interests of Hungarian agriculture and more specifically Hungarian farmers in Europe as well as globally” (Stronger Hungary, 47). Norbert Erdős, FIDESZ’s MEP, claimed in 2015 that FIDESZ actively supports and represents interests of Hungarian organic farmers, by making third-country exporters ‘prove the origin of the product in order to prevent the influx of harmful or inadequate quality organic food in the domestic market’ (FIDESZ, 1). This can be related to the debates about the revision of the EU organic regulation, making the national boundary more apparent and in line with the articulation of the security discourse. The notion of food security in FIDESZ’s case is following a more technocratic approach, uninterested in substantiality of modes of production or cultural aspects, let alone worldings. Yet, before comparing these two discursive approaches, it is important to reflect on the ways other parties in Hungary, namely those labeled as liberal (LMP) conceptualize and imagine the role of organic farming and its possible connections with security.

LMP’s political program takes a big leap on defining organic farming through the concept of security. In their political program (LMP Agenda), LMP names the chapter on agriculture “Food Security and Food Sovereignty”. One of the key aspects of emancipatory politics and emancipatory understanding of security is organized around the concept of sovereignty, inextricably tied to the thorny issue of participation (Feuchtwang, Shah, 2017: 13). The chapter on agriculture invokes Foucauldian biopolitics, stating that the fundamental aim is to “ensure that consumers are healthy and have access to reliable food supplies, which are ecologically safe and sustainable, which allows the survival of domestic varieties, improving the country’s population retention ability” (LMP Agenda, 20). The LMP Agenda presents many different goals in the field of environmental protection and agriculture, looking at food security, sustainability and emancipation as a process. Again, the dichotomies (local producers vs. monopolies) are present, though in a less assertive manner: “In order to reach this goal, we support the domestic producers the spread of organic farming, helping products to reach domestic markets. The main goal is to enable additional five hundred thousand hectares for organic farming. We encourage local trade, the production of local varieties, breaking down the monopolies in this way.” (Ibid) The “liberation of the political field” (LMP Agenda, 5) is closely connected with rural sustainability and strong agrarian strata. Moreover, LMP articulates a particular understanding of rootedness in order to position organic, domestic farmer with the emancipatory vision of security. It is about protecting “our land, waters and forests” – even though specific understandings of ‘Hungarian-ness’ are absent from this text, LMP program, though to an extent incomparable to Jobbik, asserts a connection between the producer and the land, entirely absent from i.e. FIDESZ programs. The domestic production – articulated as local, national or regional, is at the forefront of LMP’s agenda: agri-environmental and ecological farming are ultimately a way to protect the conservation areas and instill participatory democracy (ibid, p. 17).

In its Agenda, LMP addresses the question of power as relations of hegemony: in what can be articulated as Marxist critique of the modes of production and distribution present in the current state of agriculture:

...the system of distribution of development resources unduly increases the strength and wealth of the big estates, as well as territorial disparities...the land and the productive assets are belonging to foreigners or farmers from distant towns...

Conclusion

This inquiry aimed to look at the ways populist and liberal green political parties approach the issue of sustainable agriculture, based on Foucauldian notion of discourse, political ontology, and the concept of emancipation through security. The discursive framings presented in the political programs of the three parties point to a puzzling conclusion; specifically, there are many shared understandings of sustainable agriculture and the position of organic farming between Jobbik and LMP, which belong to different political traditions and ideological underpinnings. The political program of FIDESZ does not explicitly articulate the role of environmentally friendly (or organic) farming, and the notion of security is entirely absent from the environmental and agricultural section of the program. Both Jobbik

and LMP's political programs attempt to engage with security as emancipation, but in diverse ways: for Jobbik, emancipation located within the nexus of food security and national sovereignty, while LMP focuses on the individual farmer as the bearer of sustainable agriculture. Thus, it is important to discern Jobbik's and LMP's positions on sustainable agriculture. Even though both activate (to a greater or lesser extent) the concept of security as a vital component of emancipatory perspectives, the engagement with collective existence or ontological assumptions is somewhat different in the two cases. It can be inferred that the political discourse of LMP, through its calls for local land-ownership and domestic production on a small scale, attempts to at least implicitly engage with the farmer's relationship with the land, and/or nature. Nonetheless, given the nature of political programs – verbose statements of a more general nature, this is only an assumption: however, the 'rootedness' of LMP Agenda does not have much to do with national identity, but rather with a more nuanced approach to democracy.

On the other hand, Jobbik asserts the Hungarian historical experience to be “authentic” and “original”, and instilled with an almost mystical relationship – given the history of (neo) paganism (Erdelyi 2015), that is not an inaccurate claim. However, understanding this attachment and potential ontological implications will require a thorough research not only of the documents created or related to the party, but realizing the ways in which they have been informed from the constituency, thus requiring an in-depth field experience.

Some forms of political populism (in this case Jobbik), as incongruent as they are, have a lot more in common with mainstream or even left-alternative approaches to sustainability. However, it is exactly the mysticism and 'rootedness', at the foundations of the ontological assessment which many authors (Biehl, 1997, Olsen 2000) find utterly problematic for progressing towards emancipatory politics. The idea that humans should feel a connection to a place certainly makes sense for all kinds of reasons (ecological, ethical, and sociopolitical); however, one must be careful about what this might mean concretely. Who is the authentic bearer of the sustainable flag, and who is the 'real' peasant, the Heideggerian 'dweller' (Olsen 2000: 83)? These questions snowball into the massive potential that populist forces, as environmentally-friendly as they may sound, continue to present to our common understandings of autonomy and emancipation.

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The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

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