



ERPI 2018 International Conference
Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World

Conference Paper No.6

The promise? Using and misusing authoritarian populism

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17-18 March 2018

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, Netherlands

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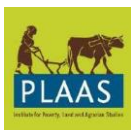
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March, 2018

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The promise? Using and misusing authoritarian populism

A. Haroon Akram-Lodhi

Abstract

Scoones et al (2018) suggests that the contemporary rural world can be characterized as having distinct forms of authoritarian populism. There is little doubt that authoritarian populism does offer insights into specific places and spaces of the contemporary rural world. However, this contribution argues key aspects of authoritarian populism are not seen across the breadth and depth of the contemporary rural world, and, as such, the use of authoritarian populism can be politically misleading. Nonetheless, it is argued, the way in which authoritarian populism in the 1980s fostered particular and specific forms of political responses are of use in developing contemporary counter-hegemonic strategies capable of challenging the regressive political character of the contemporary conjuncture.

Introduction

At the outset, it must be clearly stated that there is a lot in “Emancipatory rural politics: confronting authoritarian populism” (Scoones, Edelman, Borrás, Hall, Wolford and White 2018) that is outstanding. Seeking to facilitate the emergence of an emancipatory rural politics that is “horizontal, connecting across class, gender, racial, generational and ideological divides and transcending geographic boundaries” (Scoones et al 2018: 10), it asks “what redistributed material base is required to generate the freedoms to engage with existing authority structures” (*ibid.*), and it queries “what democratic institutions can facilitate and enable such connections to emerge and become robust” (*ibid.*). Six different “inspirations and traditions” of emancipatory rural politics are identified, and there is an insistence that “there are inevitable tensions between these, and a singular, precise, *a priori* definition” is neither possible or useful, as “a range of approaches, each contextualised, each drawing on different perspectives”, is necessary (Scoones et al 2018: 7). These six traditions are: Marx and Marxism (which is itself taken to be a broad and pluralist tradition); the libertarian socialist-anarchism of Murray Bookchin; the radical democracy of Ernesto Laclau; the radical equality of Jacques Rancière; a variety of approaches that “emphasize the structural, institutional and political conditions for emancipatory transformations; and those that engage with and learn from Karl Polanyi's “double movement”. Scoones et al (2018: 9) suggest that cutting across these six traditions are the shared concerns of redistribution, recognition and representation, and it is these shared concerns that are the basis of a new emancipatory politics. However, this places demands on “scholar-activists”¹ to be “open, inclusive and collaborative”, to be “interdisciplinary, comparative and integrative,” and to “utilise multiple approaches and methods to corroborate findings” (Scoones et al 2018: 12) because “there will never be a one-size-fits-all version of emancipatory rural politics” (Scoones et al 2018: 9). It can be suggested that from this acceptance, nay, celebration, of pluralism in rural international development studies and advocacy emerges a distinct field of study and engagement: critical agrarian studies (Edelman and Wolford 2017; Akram-Lodhi, Dietz, Engels and McKay forthcoming).

To all of this, I say, enthusiastically, “yes!”² However, now I must say “but”. If there will never be a one-size-fits-all version of emancipatory rural politics, why must emancipatory rural politics, in the current conjuncture, be framed within the one-size-fits-all theorisation of “authoritarian populism”? Scoones et al (2018: 2) define authoritarian populism, following the groundbreaking work of Stuart Hall,³ as a “movement towards a dominative and 'authoritarian' form of democratic class politics – paradoxically rooted in the 'transformism' (Gramsci's term) of populist discontents' (Hall 1985: 118) that reflects changes in the balance of forces “between the ruling bloc, the state and the dominated classes” (Scoones et al 2018: 2). This is indeed Hall's understanding of authoritarian populism, and there is little doubt that authoritarian populism does offer insights into specific places and spaces of the contemporary rural world. However, I will argue that Hall's understanding of authoritarian populism is a far more precise – and nuanced – use of the concept than that found in Scoones et al (2018), and that Hall's understanding is certainly not seen across the breadth and depth of the contemporary rural world. As such, the use of authoritarian populism as a framing for contemporary emancipatory rural politics could be, in many contexts, at best politically misleading and at worst

¹ Or what the late Peter Limquenco called “partisan scholars”.

² As someone who came of age in the late 1970s and early 1980s, I strongly disliked the fact that struggles over emancipatory political ideas were framed through a Leninist lens. Contestation was polemical and confrontational, with one side being right and the other side being wrong; there was a profound unwillingness to engage in a process of inclusive learning from all of those engaged in emancipatory politics. This was not, however, an approach that feminist scholarship in international development studies adopted; in the late 1980s and early 1990s I found it remarkable that scholars such as Diane Elson and Nancy Folbre entered into debates with those that they disagreed with by first identifying common ground, and in so doing were inclusive, not exclusive. Leninist approaches to debates over social theory and emancipatory political ideas are rooted in masculinist approaches to debate that must be rejected.

³ Interestingly, the other two main theorists of authoritarian populism in the United Kingdom in the early and mid-1980s are never mentioned: Andrew Gamble and Martin Jacques. Jacques' role cannot be overemphasized, as he not only co-authored articles with Hall but also acted as Hall's editor for all of Hall's significant interventions around authoritarian populism.

politically dangerous. Nonetheless, it will be also argued that the way in which authoritarian populism in the 1980s fostered particular and specific forms of political responses are of use in developing contemporary counter-hegemonic strategies capable of challenging the extraordinarily regressive political character of the contemporary conjuncture.

Stuart Hall's authoritarian populism

Stuart Hall first used the phrase authoritarian populism in 1979 in the groundbreaking “The great moving right show”,⁴ when he wrote that it was

an exceptional form of the capitalist state ... which ... has retained most (though not all) of the formal representative institutions in place, and which at the same time has been able to construct around itself an active popular consent. This undoubtedly represents a decisive shift in the balance of hegemony (Hall 1988: 42).

In this formulation, there are three key ideas that are central to Hall's understanding of authoritarian populism, which have to be fleshed out, in order for the concept to be understood: the capitalist state; active popular consent; and the balance of hegemony.

Hall dates the rise of authoritarian populism in the United Kingdom, in my view correctly, to 1975. In light of the ongoing collapse of the post-World War II political and social settlement around the Keynesian welfare state, authoritarian populism had as its “project ... to transform the state in order to restructure society: to decentre, to displace, the whole post-war formation; to reverse the political culture which had formed the basis of the political settlement – the historic compromise between labour and capital – that had been in place from 1945” (Hall 1988: 163). This was possible because “when, in a crisis, the traditional alignments are disrupted, it is possible, on the very ground of this break, to construct the people into a populist political project: *with*, not against, the power bloc,” bringing “into existence a new 'historic bloc' between certain sections of the dominant and dominated classes,” setting “in place an alternative set of equivalents: 'Them *and* us equals *we*.' Then it positions we – 'the people' – in a particular relation to capital: behind it, dominated by its imperatives (profitability, accumulation); yet at the same time, yoked to it, identified with it” (Hall 1988: 49). For this process to take place, it was necessary to undertake “a reversal in ordinary common sense” (Hall 1988: 164). Common sense was a phrase of Gramsci's: “a chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions” (Gramsci 1971: 422), a set of attitudes, moral views and empirical beliefs reflecting an individual's concrete experiences in society but lacking consistency or cohesion. It is the organic intellectuals, “the thinking and organizing element of a particular fundamental social class ... distinguished ... by their ... function in directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong” (Hoare 1971: 3) that shape common sense. Organic intellectuals arise because

every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it a homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields (Gramsci 1971: 5).

Organic intellectuals negotiate individual subjectivity by welding together “dispersed wills” into a shared awareness and meaning. They are thus the agents of a specific social group within a class that inscribe meaning during the negotiation of subjectivity. Intellectuals do not however just create unity on a social, political and economic plane within a class; they also translate this unity into a moral and intellectual leadership that transcends class divisions. As Gramsci (1971: 12) argues,

⁴ It is worth noting, especially in the wake of his death, that Hall was vilified on much of the left for his analysis of authoritarian populism. Indeed, the principal source for Scoones *et al* (2018) is a response to a damning critique of the concept.

the intellectuals are the dominant group's 'deputies' exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government. These comprise: 1. The 'spontaneous' consent given by great masses of the population to the gender direction imposed upon social life by the dominant fundamental group.

Organic intellectuals shape the construction of consent for class power because the ideologies which arise from the mediation of experience by organic intellectuals "have a validity that is 'psychological'" (Gramsci 1971: 377). Thus, for Gramsci, as understood by Hall, subordination is not externally imposed. It is, through the role of intellectuals, internalized as part of culture, consciousness and identity, articulating "into a configuration different subjects, different identities, different projects, different aspirations" (Hall 1988: 166). So it is the intellectuals that generate active popular consent by building the moral and intellectual hegemony necessary for domination to be reproduced through the fabric of a broad social consensus rooted in a common culture that unifies multiple material realities. Hall was clear about what he meant by hegemony: "the ceaseless work required to construct a social authority throughout all levels of social activity" (quoted in Gamble 1988: 180). Fundamental to the establishment of hegemony is the capacity of dominant classes to compromise their narrow class interests in order to secure consent. This was what Gramsci characterizes as a "historic bloc", an alliance of social forces led by the dominant class force.

So Stuart Hall's understanding is that the authoritarian populism of which he wrote was a hegemonic project rooted in "the fears, the anxieties, the lost identities, of a people" (Hall 1988: 167) searching for answers that were provided by the organic intellectuals of the dominant class, in a manner favourable to the interests of that class. As Andrew Gamble put it, authoritarian populism "is the response of the dominant fractions of the capitalist class" (Gamble 1988: 190). However, one other aspect of Hall's use of authoritarian populism must be discussed. Gramsci's "conception of politics is fundamentally contingent, fundamentally open-ended" (Hall 1988: 169) because "hegemony is not a state of grace which is installed forever" (Hall 1988: 170). In other words, the historic bloc underpinning hegemony must continually be constructed and reconstructed across different sites of cultural, social, political and economic life, and that is where the opportunity for emancipatory politics lies: "is it possible that the immense new material, cultural and technological capacities, far outstripping Marx's wildest dreams, which are now actually in our hands" can be seized as a "means of history-making, of making new human subjects, and shove them in the direction of a new culture?" (Hall 1988: 173). Indeed. But, Hall would insist, this could only occur through the organic intellectuals of an emancipatory politics.

Authoritarian populism in crisis

In the British debates of the 1980s,⁵ authoritarian populism was the ideological foundation of what came to be known as neoliberalism, in that the election of Thatcher and Reagan propelled through the 1980s and 1990s external liberalization and the globalization of capital through the freeing of markets in goods, services and finance, internal de-regulation, the literal crushing of unions, the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the introduction of market-led "reforms" in education, healthcare and other agencies undertaking government activities, cuts in taxes, and cuts in social provisioning. This free economy was predicated upon a reconfiguration of the role of an exceptionally strong state with regard to its citizens. The strong state became a mechanism of disciplinary enforcement for those left behind by the vagaries of a neoliberal globalization that was based upon people acting as "rational economic man" pursuing their own self-interest through their involvement with market transactions in all spheres of life, as society became embedded in the market. This was perhaps most dramatically captured when Margaret Thatcher (1987) famously declared that "there is no such thing as society. There is living tapestry of men and women ... and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves." However, and it is important to stress this, a hegemonic project is about more than sustaining the leading position of the dominant class. It is about sustaining class power; and this requires not just economic power. In this, Hall follows Gramsci: "there can be no hegemony with

⁵ As a participant, albeit peripheral, in those debates, it is worth stressing how we were maligned as "Eurocommunists".

'the decisive nucleus of the economic'. On the other hand, do not fall into the trap of the old mechanical economism ... Power ... is ... constructed in relation to ... moral, intellectual, cultural, ideological and sexual questions" (Hall 1988: 170). Thatcher understood this, saying in 1981 "economics are the method; the object is to change the soul" (Eaton 2018).

There can be little doubt that the highest pinnacle of authoritarian populism was reached in the late 1990s, when center-left governments in the United States and the United Kingdom completely conceded to the economic dimensions of authoritarian populism, "adapting society to the global economy's needs, tutoring its citizens to be self-sufficient and self-reliant in order to compete more successfully in the global marketplace" (Hall 1998: 11), treating the economy as being separate from and superior to society. Having captured "the soul", it was, in Nancy Fraser's memorable formulation, "progressive neoliberalism". A neoliberal story, underpinned by authoritarian populism, allowed the interpretation of "complex and contradictory signals" because of its "narrative fidelity" to "our competitive, self-maximizing nature" (Monbiot 2017).

Yet far from ushering in a dynamic global capitalist economy the aggregate economic performance of the neoliberal era was significantly weaker than that of the years of the post-war settlement. In large part, this was because of the globalization of capitalist competition, which, in an effort to avoid competition, resulted in an unparalleled round of mergers and acquisitions, excesses witnessed in corporate tax competition among different jurisdictions to attract footloose global capital, corporate tax evasion through the use of perfectly legal but morally questionable accounting practices, along with significant corporate malfeasance, only the barest bones of which have been revealed. Globally, segments of transnational capital boomed, even as smaller capital struggled and workers were displaced, first in the the global North by workers in China, and latterly by automation. All the while, inequalities of wealth and income became increasingly glaring.

When the financial crisis of 2007 – 2008 hit, it appeared, for the briefest of moments, that neoliberal globalization, nay, capitalism itself, might collapse. Yet it did not. No effort was made by dominant classes to use the state to address the foundational causes of the crisis. The international system of open financial flows, which facilitated the crisis, was not challenged. Indeed, the financial sector was bailed out even though the financial deregulation frenzy of the 1980s through the 2000s was the primary source of the crisis. No effort was made to discipline finance, as occurred in the 1930s. No effort was made to restore production that was lost because of the crisis; rather, in an age in which central bankers are the high priests of the global economy, efforts went into simply prevent prices from falling further. Finally, while the fiscal space available for government to steer the economy in the interests of citizens was amply demonstrated, no effort was made to develop fiscal stabilizers that would protect citizens from swings in corporate profitability.

As a result of the continuing sway of neoliberalism, and notwithstanding the very recent improvement in growth performance across the OECD in 2017, the economy recovery since 2007 – 2008 has been anaemic. True, stockmarkets have boomed – and then crashed. But productive investment and productivity growth remains resolutely weak, and while employment has picked up, wages have only improved when states have intervened to engineer increases in minimum wages. The lack of dynamism in global capitalism is witnessed in a lack of the innovation that capitalist competition is supposed to engender; instead, globalized capitalist firms buy up innovators, seek out ever-larger market share, and engage in new forms of enclosure, of nature and data. Finally, dire warnings about the next financial crisis continue to be voiced. We continue to live in fragile and extraordinarily contingent new times.

In this light, Scoones *et al* (2018: 1) highlights the rise of nationalist protectionism, highly contested national elections appealing to "the people", the articulation of political concern about the growing numbers of "mobile poor", appeals for security at the expense of civil liberties, an increase in extractivist modes of capitalism, and a continued undermining of the state's capacity to support its citizens; it is these political-economic dynamics that are named as the basis for authoritarian populism. But it is not enough to label something for it to be so; and with regard to authoritarian populism, the key issue must be: where do we see organic intellectuals of the ruling class constructing a new common sense capable of

consolidating “a configuration of different subjects, different identities, different projects, different aspirations” (Hall 1988: 166) into a hegemonic historic bloc? If I look at the countries discussed in Scoones *et al* (2018) I agree that there is a strong rise in faith-based nationalism in India, Turkey and Myanmar. But that faith-based nationalism is predicated upon the construction of an exclusivist other – Muslims and Kurds – and not the construction of a “we” that was so disarmingly central to Hall's use of authoritarian populism in the 1980s. Similarly, it is true that the lack of material opportunity can propel young people into movements that are sometimes associated with radical Islam, but this is, by and large, once more an example of faith-based nationalism, not authoritarian populism – extra-judicial execution was mostly not part of authoritarian populism. If I look at the Philippines, South Africa, Ethiopia or Zimbabwe, what I see is profound and widespread opposition to governments, not the creation of a historic bloc; and, in the case of the latter three, ruling elites needing to make concessions to oppositional forces outside and inside ruling parties in an effort to try and win over oppositional currents within ruling parties or civil society. Indeed, the widespread backlash to the efforts of the ruling elite's attempts to criminalize senior members of the Worker's Party in Brazil does not appear to represent the formation of a type of authoritarian populism, in Hall's use of the word; this is naked class politics. Finally, several times in Scoones *et al.* (2018) reference is made to conjunctural events in the United States and the United Kingdom; however, with Trump's approval ratings the lowest of any US President since Truman, and with the UK Conservative Party in disarray, neither appear to be constructing a hegemonic historic bloc; indeed, both appear to be reliant on a base that shuns being part of a hegemonic historic bloc.

This perhaps explains what for me where some glaring inconsistencies in Scoone's *et al* (2018) use of authoritarian populism. Scoones *et al* (2018: 3) identify a continuum of regime types that may be authoritarian populist: “from 'competitive' regimes that allow some political space for opponents to 'non-competitive' ones that in extreme cases border on full-blown dictatorships”. Moreover, policies are often contradictory, “shoring up exclusionary and even violent political power, while selectively offering progressive policies” (*ibid.*). This would appear to describe most governments, and by describing most governments, provides insights into none. It certainly describes the Canadian government, which is a competitive regime that offers progressive soundbites while shoring up exclusionary power. But the Canadian government is, in the first place, not authoritarian populist, in large part because, in the second place, it is incapable of reconstructing common sense. Finally, Scoones *et al.* (2018) say that “not all populism is right-wing and authoritarian”, as it is capable of being “a positive, mobilising force of solidarity and emancipation” (*ibid.*); it is not clear to me why, in a piece on authoritarian populism, some space is offered to non-authoritarian solidaristic populism and not non-authoritarian right-wing populism.

Certainly, it is clear that major political and economic transformations are taking place around the world. Moreover, some of these may warrant the label “authoritarian populism.” However, to try and understand the gamut of political and economic transformations sweeping the rural work under the concept of authoritarian populism seems to be, as proposed in Scoones *et al* (2018), quite misleading. The current crisis is a crisis of the authoritarian populism that legitimated neoliberalism.

Right-wing nationalist populism

I totally concur that the basis of a new emancipatory politics needs to be based on redistribution, recognition and representation. However, authoritarian populism does not provide the needed conceptual – and political – lens for the ideological parameters shaping the rural world to understand the development of a hegemonic common sense. I do not think that there can be a single common lens. Nonetheless, a component of authoritarian populism is strongly in evidence: right-wing nationalist populism. It is, in this regard, important to note that authoritarian populism in the United Kingdom in the 1980s did not begin to develop strong roots until after the end of the Falklands/Malvinas War, with its strong nationalist overtones. Long forgotten, too, was the United States' invasion of Grenada. As then, right-wing nationalism is on the rise. When Teresa May says that a “citizen of the world” is a “citizen of nowhere”, it is clear appeal to using the nation as a basis of a core identity.

Nationalism is on the rise as a result of the crisis of a formerly hegemonic authoritarian populist neoliberalism. Economic failures in production, finance and distribution have fractured dominant class

interests. Global capital demonstrates a distinct lack of dynamism, while national capitals are unable to overcome the absolute advantages that global capital has developed (Shaikh, 2016). As a result, the class project of the conjuncture is exceptionally unclear. Fractured dominant classes have disarticulated intellectuals from the interests that, during the rise of authoritarian populism and, economically, neoliberalism, they supported – Joseph Stiglitz and Jeffrey Sachs being the two prime examples. There is no common sense, especially since the 2007 – 2008 financial crisis demonstrated that the neoliberal emperor has no clothes, and into the void has stepped a right-wing nationalist populism across Europe and the United States.

Thirty years of neoliberalism has decimated entire communities; one only has to visit the failed municipal states across the United States to see the destruction. In order to understand why, with this failure, nationalism has arisen, recently uncovered lectures by Karl Polanyi (1940: 7)⁶ in which he responds to the rise of fascism, are instructive:

If international division of labour is effected by competition and consequent elimination of the less efficient, then much will depend upon the rate at which change proceeds as well as upon the dimensions of the units involved... If whole countrysides, countries or continents compete, the elimination of the less efficient may involve the ruin and destruction of whole communities. Then the system, far from being a blessing, becomes a deadly danger and must be checked at all costs... The more intense international cooperation⁷ was the more close the interdependence of the various parts of the world grew, the more essential became the only effective organizational unit of an industrial society...: the nation. Modern nationalism is a protective reaction against the dangers inherent in an interdependent world.

Right-wing nationalism might be thought of, in a Polyanian sense, as a regressive counter-movement. It appeals to people deprived of their agency by forces outside their control, which is in this case neoliberal globalization. It is rooted in an appeal that political legitimacy flows from “the people” who are being squeezed by populations that are not part of “the people”: foreigners and welfare “cheats”. Right-wing nationalism insists that nations differ, and that the government of a nation should act to express the general will of “the people”. Right-wing nationalism can strive to be incorporated into a hegemonic common sense. For example, there is little doubt that Steve Bannon wants to construct a far-right common sense predicated on nationalist populism. However, nationalism can stand alone, outside of common sense, held by a group that cling to it in response to their loss of agency.

In this light, it is worth considering the coalition that elected Donald Trump. It was, in the words of Hugh Gusterson (2017: 212, “an improbable coalition”, consisting of the majority of voters who have an income of more than \$50,000 a year, a majority of white women with a college education, evangelical Christians, and a huge majority of voters with no college education. While the latter group – the much-maligned white working class – probably voted against their material interests for reasons of nationalism, faith, and the “tangible benefits” that whiteness “continues to pay” (Zeitiz 2017), the former two groups voted for Trump because they too lost agency under neoliberalism and Trump pandered to a belief – or more properly, a hope – that he might bring them material benefits. Indeed, as Walden Bello (2018:54) reminds us, around the world “the middle class has been the pivot around which politics revolves in times of great fluidity”. Thus, with the loss of agency – political, economic or physical – comes the possibility that right-wing populist politicians will exploit the insecurities arising from the loss of agency by claiming a connection to “the people”.

Yet, as we well know, nationalism is politically constructed, manipulating history and culture to create “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983). Trump's imagined community is inherently unstable because “the middle class is notoriously volatile” (Bello 2018: 54). His tax cuts benefit capital and the oligarchs, blistering de-regulation benefits capital, and less affordable health care panders to corporate

⁶ Grammatical mistakes are found in the transcription of the original lectures.

⁷ My sense is that this word should be competition. Perhaps he said the wrong word, or the wrong word was transcribed.

interests in the sector. Thus, behind his right-wing nationalist populism are fractional class interests that seek to use tradition, hierarchy, deference, protectionism and supposed orthodoxies to support their class interests in the wake of the failure of neoliberalism. As Michael Roberts (2018) puts it, “it was not the 'excesses' of neoliberalism ... that caused the rise of nationalism ..., but the failure of the capitalist mode of production to deliver.”

The return of class and the contemporary politics of hegemony

The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative is incredibly important. However, in linking its understanding of authoritarian populism to the work of Stuart Hall, it is misusing Hall's understanding of authoritarian populism. Hall understood authoritarian populism as building the ideological consent for a period of neoliberalism that was “systematically stacked in favour of capital against labour” (Jacques 2016). In the wake of the 2007 – 2008 financial crisis, in some places it may be possible to identify authoritarian populism, in Hall's sense, as operating. But in many places and spaces it is not authoritarian populism but varieties of right-wing nationalist populist coalitions that have emerged. These right-wing nationalist populist coalitions are not hegemonic projects, as was authoritarian populism. Rather, they demonstrate in the developed countries “the return of class as a central agency in politics” (*ibid.*), and especially the working class,⁸ whose “orientation, far from predetermined ... is a function of politics” (*ibid.*). This, then, is a key contemporary political event in the developed countries to which a response is needed. What kind of response? In the 1980s in the United Kingdom particular and specific forms of political responses were developed, but ineffective, most notably the idea of a counter-hegemonic broad democratic alliance.

Notwithstanding the misuse of authoritarian populism temporarily by Scoones *et al* (2018), it seems to me that the idea of a broad democratic alliance is of use in developing contemporary counter-hegemonic strategies capable of challenging the regressive political character of the contemporary conjuncture in the rural world. There, it is necessary to use praxis and learning to relentlessly contest the ongoing crisis across a range of arenas in social life in an effort to construct a new "common sense" that configures different subjects, identities, projects and aspirations, building unity out of difference. It has to be said, then, that this is in fact what movements for food sovereignty have already been doing since the early 2000s, seeking to inclusively find common ground and thus "building the moral and intellectual hegemony necessary for...a broad social consensus" (Akram-Lodhi 1992: 193) that welds together dispersed wills into a new hegemonic bloc around food. Stuart Hall (1988: 164) writes that “every crisis is also a moment of reconstruction”. With neoliberalism in decay but not yet dead, “social forces and movements, in their diversity” need to be “articulated into a set of strategic alliances” (Hall 1988: 170) in order to engage in a war of position. Movements for food sovereignty do not need to focus on the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative's use of authoritarian populism because they already offer a way of engaging in a war of position through an emancipatory politics based on broad democratic alliances predicated upon the shared concerns of redistribution, recognition and representation.

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⁸ Jacques makes the important point that in 2015 48 per cent of Americans described themselves as working class.

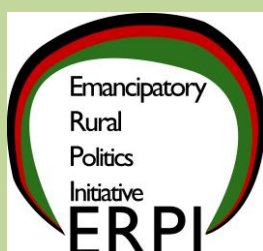
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ERPI 2018 International Conference
Authoritarian Populism and the
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17-18 March 2018
International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
The Hague, Netherlands

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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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