The Leverhulme Trust
APPLICATION FORM - Research Project Grant

Applicant: Dr [redacted] ID/Ref [redacted]
Project Title: Exploring Left-Wing Populism in an Age of Anti-Politics

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Proposal

| Long Title | Exploring Left-Wing Populism in an Age of Anti-Politics |
| Short Title | Left-Wing Populism and Anti-Politics |
Summary

Context:

It has been widely argued by the popular media and in journalistic commentary that we are witnessing an unprecedented upsurge of populist forms of political rhetoric and mobilisation across Europe (Painter, 2013; The Economist, 2014b). This rise in populism has been attributed to the ongoing economic crisis since 2007, a growing mistrust of representative democracy (Painter 2013, Moffitt and Tomney 2014) and a widespread ‘anti-politics’ sensibility among European electorates (Filinders, 2012). Against this backdrop, social movements and political parties as politically diverse as the National Front (France), The Dutch Party for Freedom, Podemos (Spain) and the electorally successful Syriza (Greece) are all being characterised as populist (e.g. Traynor 2014). What adds to this sense that something new is afoot is the fact that some of these radical ‘insurgents’ are quite happily self-identifying as ‘populist’ (e.g. Syriza and Podemos), arguing that this term needs to be reclaimed in the name of a
radical democratic politics.

Despite being used by the popular media to refer to a wide array of ideological diverse movements, populism remains overwhelmingly associated with a xenophobic, far-right politics (Economist, 2014b) and, as such, with a pathological ‘politics of discontentment’ (Baggini 2013) which, according to many, can only be tackled through a reinvigoration of ‘moderate’ or ‘centre ground’ politics (Fieschi, 2013). Reflecting this sentiment, Counterpoint, a London based research consultancy, identified populism tout court as the ‘top global risk’ for 2014 (Counterpoint, 2014).

While not wanting to dismiss concerns about right wing populism, we want to draw attention to the recent emergence of a distinctively left-wing populist politics across Europe. The electoral success of Syriza in Greece and the swelling membership of Podemos in Spain testify to its growing allure. Closer to home, the recent pronouncements of public figures as diverse as Ed Miliband, Russell Brand, Owen Jones and Natalie Bennett have all been cited as evidence of a burgeoning left-wing populism in Britain (Friedland, 2013; Economist, 2014b). Indeed, the political commentator Owen Jones has made it explicit by calling for the mobilisation of ‘left-wing populism to counter UKIP’ (Jones, 2014).

Despite this trend, a survey of the literature suggests that academics have paid scant attention to left-wing populism as a distinct phenomenon from its right-wing counterpart, and to the extent that they have, their focus has been almost exclusively on Latin America (Collins 2014; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013; Cameron 2009). Unsurprisingly, therefore, one can find little scholarship on the potential differences (as well as possible overlaps) between left and right-wing populism, especially in the context of Europe.

Acknowledging this neglect, several pioneering scholars have begun to engage in the task of disaggregating the discrete features of left-wing populism and assessing its potentially distinct contribution to democratic politics (March 2007, 2012; Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2013; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012; Gilbert 2014). Interestingly, based on their initial findings, a number of them suggest that left-wing populism is more ‘inclusionary’ in nature, either because it is committed to an egalitarian, redistributive ‘materialist’ agenda (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012: 167, Gilbert 2014), or because it is more ‘active, democratic and emancipatory’ in its practices (Stavrakakis and Katsambekis 2014: 135). Either way, left-wing populism is currently being presented in the academic literature as a potentially democratising force.

The main objective of this proposed study is to build on and contribute to this excellent, but still preliminary, research on left-wing populism. More concretely, we seek to investigate the discourses and practices that constitute left-wing populism in Britain and to critically interrogate its inclusionary and exclusionary dynamics with respect to gender and race. In doing so, we want to take up the call of Mudde and Kaltwasser (2015) who argue in their most recent publication that, ‘the relationship between gender and populism has probably become the most relevant of the many understudied issues related to populism’ (2015, p21).

Before outlining our objectives in more detail, a few words are needed about our working definition of ‘left-wing populism’ and then about our two proposed domains of analysis. Turning to our definition of the ‘left’ in left-wing populism, we follow the insights of Roberto Bobbio (1998) who claims that ‘the left’ is best understood as a political project animated by the ‘emotive value of equality’ (Bobbio, 1996, p65). While taking historically grounded and context specific forms, this project is based on a shared moral objection to diverse forms of inequality, domination and exploitation, combined with a belief that these features of contemporary societies can and should be remedied through collective political action. By identifying the left with egalitarianism we also align ourselves with the work of others who have sought to delineate what is ‘left’ of left populism (e.g. March 2007).

As for the term ‘populism’, there are a number of possible definitions to choose from. Populism has been variously characterised as a ‘political logic’ constituting the terrain of political struggle (Laclau 2005), a form of political mobilisation (Jansen, 2011), or as a ‘thin ideology’ (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013) which only gains specificity when it merges with more substantive ideational systems (e.g. nationalism, socialism). While all of these conceptions are relevant and insightful in different ways, we prefer to align ourselves with Moffitt and Tormey who define populism as a mode of political practice that incorporates a range of ‘tropes, themes and ways of acting’ as well as forms of rhetoric and discourse (2014: 389). More specifically, they point to three interrelated features that render populist politics sui generis: a) an appeal to and rendering of ‘the people’ which is constructed in opposition to an ‘other’ (e.g. the elite, the establishment, the system or a marginalised group) b) the evocation of a crisis and/or injustice which poses a threat to ‘the people’ and c) a form of political rhetoric that seeks to speak to and from the quotidian experiences and marginalised knowledge of the ‘common’ man and woman (2014: 392-93).

With this initial definition in mind, we propose to examine two different social domains in which left-wing populism is currently finding expression. The first is party-based left-wing populism and includes the case of Left Unity and the
Green Party.

Left Unity (LU) is a new party established in 2013 which aims to offer a left of centre alternative to mainstream British politics. Championed by film director Ken Loach and veteran CND activist Kate Hudson, along with others, LU claims to fight for the 99% and provocatively characterises itself as a 'pop up' Syriza. Seeking to cement its alliance with more successful European left-wing populist parties, last November it organised a national speaking tour with representatives from both Podemos and Syriza around the theme of 'doing politics differently'. Indeed, inspired by Podemos, a number of activists have suggested that LU reframe its discourse from one of 'left vs right' to one of 'us vs them', arguing for the need to 'focus existing anti-establishment feeling' and to adopt strategies that are more 'populist' (Left Unity 2014). To this end, LU has identified the Labour Party who 'are attacking the poorest' and 'the rich and the bankers who blew up the economy' as their key opponents and the 'struggles of ordinary people' as their main cause (Left Unity 2015). Finally, in a context of crisis and enforced austerity, LU distinguishes itself from both the traditional and centre-left by claiming to have 'feminism, socialism, environmentalism and anti-racism at its heart' (Left Unity 2015).

Our second case is the Green Party, whose membership is now flourishing (with a 28% increase this year) and which has been described by sceptics as a 'UKIP of the left' (Economist, 2014b) and by its supporters as not populist enough (Pels, 2014). Although the 'populist' label might well be rejected by its leader Natalie Bennett, it is equally clear that the political rhetoric of Green Party members, including Bennett's, is becoming more populist in tone. So, for instance, Bennett's plea for 'people to fight back' against the '1%' (Bennett 2015), and her statement that 'The political class does not look like, sound like or have the life experiences of most people in Britain', both point to an attempt to divide the political field into an 'us' — the people — that is distinct from a 'them' — the elite' (Mason, 2014). Moreover, MEP Molly Scott Cato's evocation of the 'carbon bubble as the next financial crisis' (Scott Cato 2015), Caroline Lucas' call for 'common-sense change' (Green Party 2015a), and the claim of the Manifesto that 'The Green Party will trust citizens and workers, not overregulate them' (Green Party Manifesto 2010) all speak to an increasingly populist infused political discourse. Last but not least, the explicit support granted to the Greens from cultural and media celebrities, such as Russell Brand (along with the contention that this has aroused) is adding to the perception that it is becoming more populist in both word and deed.

A second domain of left-wing populism that we wish to explore is what we shall call 'celebrity-based left-wing populism'. Drawing on the work of Moffitt and Tormey (2014), from whom we take our working definition of populism, as well as that of Street (2012), we suggest that the increasingly 'mediatisation' or 'stylisation of politics', in which citizens are progressively transformed into spectators rather than active agents, makes it incumbent on researchers of contemporary democratic politics to take into account the role of 'style', 'aesthetics' and cultural performances in shaping popular opinion and political representation (Rai, 2014). As part of this process, attention has to be paid to what Marsh, Hart and Tindall (2010) and Street call 'celebrity politics' or 'celebrity activism' in which media personalities seek to shape wider political debate by reaching out to and connecting with 'detached' and disinterested citizens (2012, p. 347-51).

Our proposed study of celebrity activism will embrace several left-wing media personalities, including comedian and activist Russell Brand, writer Laurie Penny and Guardian writer Owen Jones, all of whom see themselves as activists rooted in specific political campaigns (e.g. the anti-austerity Peoples Assemblies) and who have self-consciously set themselves the task of 'popularising' left-wing ideas. Brand, for instance, has insisted that 'the people have the wisdom, not the politicians' (Brand 2014), and has condemned the government and its attack on 'ordinary people' (Brand 2013). Elsewhere, Owen Jones has positioned the 'Westminster Cartel' as the real villains of the 2008 crisis (Jones 2014), and recently went on tour with pop singer Paloma Faith offering her fans a left-wing critique of UKIP (Petridis, 2015), whilst Laurie Penny has offered a trenchant critique of the values of the British elite (Penny 2013). Taken together, this suggests that forms of left-wing populism, as expressed and enacted by media savvy 'celebrity' leftists, is indeed a significant emerging dimension of wider public debate that merits greater analytical scrutiny.

By choosing to explore left-wing populism in two very different social realms we hope to tap into and draw out a wider spectrum of features and enactments than would be possible by examining only one of them. In addition to expanding our study's empirical breadth, we also anticipate the possibility that each domain of left-wing populism may engender different logics of action with political parties being driven more by strategic considerations than the public expressions of celebrity activism. If this proves to be the case (and it may not), then it will allow us to critique (or confirm) prevailing conceptualisations of populism which present it as a highly instrumentalised politics (Moffitt and Tormey 2014).

Objectives:
This project will pursue four general lines of inquiry, each generating its own set of questions.

1) Empirically Mapping Left-Wing Populism in Britain: the case of LU, the Green Party and celebrity activism

As stated above, little has been written on left-wing populism in general and even less on our three cases. In this context, we will ask:

- What does British left-wing populism 'look' and 'sound' like? In other words, who are the key actors; what are they saying and doing; how are they saying and doing it?
- To what extent and in what ways do identity markers such as gender, race, class and sexuality constitute left-wing populism?

2) Interrogating Left-wing Populism as a site of inclusionary/exclusionary dynamics.

Drawing on our previous research into the power dynamics shaping left politics (Dean 2014; Eschle and Maiguashca 2010), as well as on an array of other feminist and anti-racist scholarship (Coleman and Bassi, 2011; Ahmed, 2012), we seek to critically examine the assumption that left-wing populism tends to be 'inclusionary'. We will ask:

- What role does gender and race play in shaping the discourses and socio-political practices of activists in our three cases?
- Are these dynamics inclusionary or exclusionary?
- What are the progressive/transformative possibilities of these performances/enactments of populism?

3) Comparing Left-Wing Populisms

In addition to reflecting on the overlaps and divergences in the enactments of our three cases of left-wing populism, we will also seek to compare them to ‘non-populist’ forms of left politics in Britain. Here we take our cue from the work of Luke March who characterises left populism, with its broad appeal to the people and its preference for the language of ‘common sense’, rather than ‘scientific truths’, as a ‘shadow’ of contemporary socialist politics (March 2007). In light of this, we will ask:

- What are the similarities and/or differences in the discourses and enactments of left-wing populism across our three cases?
- How do they differ from those of the ‘non-populist’ left in Britain?

4) Conceptualising Left-Wing Populism

Learning from the empirical insights that our study generates, we will first evaluate our own working definition of populism, drawn from Moffitt and Tormey, and then go on to critically assess alternative conceptualisations of populism to explore to what extent they resonate with our findings. To this end, we will ask:

- To what extent does our conceptualisation of populism - as a political practice qua embodied, aesthetic performance - enable us to explore important aspects of this phenomenon that other conceptualisations do not?
- What does our conception of populism add to other definitions in the field?
- What does our definition miss?
Methodology:

We will adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to our study, drawing on cultural and political theory, feminist theory, social movement studies, and political science to inform our empirical analysis. This multi-layer framework reflects the fact that has a political theory background, and has published extensively on theoretical aspects of left and radical politics as well as on feminist theory and activism (2010, 2014). In addition, has expertise in the British cultural studies tradition (Hall, 1981), and thus brings to the project a sensitivity to the theory and analysis of the intersections of left politics and popular culture. By contrast, comes from a social movement studies tradition (which is in and of itself interdisciplinary in orientation), and the bulk of her work has hitherto focussed on the relationship between feminist activism and a range of left-wing movements such as the ‘global justice’ movement, anarchism and London Occupy (2010; 2014). The RA will be chosen in light of their expertise in political parties in general, and left parties, in particular.

The four methods that will be deployed in this study are the following:

1) The collection, coding and textual analysis of a broad range of written documents both online and offline (provides data for all 4 objectives)

For the purposes of our project, two different sets of publications will be gathered and analysed. The first group of documents pertains to our two political parties and will include their manifestos, policy documents and publicity/campaigning material. The second group of texts will be selected because they reflect public debate on the left in Britain and because they are the chosen vehicles for our media personalities to express their ideas. These will include left-wing news and comment websites and publications such as The Guardian, New Statesman and Open Democracy as well as popular books such as Laurie Penny’s Unspeaking Things, Owen Jones’ The Establishment and Russell Brand’s Revolution which have all received widespread coverage and have generated substantial debate about youth, inequality and political disaffection in contemporary Britain. In addition, we shall also examine the transcripts of interviews with these celebrity activists as well as TV programs (e.g. Question Time) in which they are afforded considerable air time.

2) Participant observation at party conferences, political and cultural events, public debates and mass demonstrations (provides data for all 4 objectives)

In addition to textual analysis, our dissection of left-wing populism will also have a significant ethnographic component. Drawing on our earlier research on gender and left politics in contemporary Britain – and inspired by postcolonial feminist scholar Shirin Rai’s (2014) recent formation of a ‘political performance framework’ – we will devote considerable time to analysing the forms of speech and repertoires of performance characteristic of left-wing populism. More concretely, this will take the form of participant observation at a range of different political and cultural events. In terms of the former, we will attend a number of national, regional and/or local political party meetings/conferences as well as more informal events such as protests and demonstrations, organised by the political parties we are studying as well as the TUC and the People’s Assembly. In terms of the latter, we will go to cultural events such as the Edinburgh Festival of Politics as well as others organised by think tanks such as Demos and Policy Network in which populist ideas are both expressed and critically engaged with. We will also attend ad hoc events relevant to the project (examples of which would be events such as the recent Guardian Live event involving Owen Jones and Russell Brand).

3) Semi-structured interviews (provides data for all 4 objectives).

In total, we anticipate conducting at least 80 semi-structured interviews with party leaders, party activists and ‘celebrity activists’. Our sample would include Natalie Bennett (Leader of Green Party), Caroline Lucas (MP Green Party) Shahrar Ali (Deputy Leader), Kate Hudson (National Secretary of LU), Ken Loach (founder of LU); Salman Shaheen and Felicity Dowling (two principle spokespeople for Left Unity); Russell Brand, Owen Jones and Laurie Penny. The PI has already established contacts with most of the above.

In addition to these ‘key informants’, we will also talk to other left activists from the wider green and left movement (e.g. the Birmingham based Black Environment Network) in order to corroborate our findings as well as gauge their perceptions of our three cases both in terms of their degree of populism and the extent to which they are
inclusionary/progressive.

While we will start the interview process by talking to ‘key informants’, we will also deploy ‘snowballing’ to expand our sample. So, for example, within Left Unity we will make every effort to target members of a range of caucuses which have been established to represent “marginalised” groups such as the Women’s Caucus, Disabled Members Caucus, LGBTQ Caucus of LU, and the Black and Ethnic Members Caucus which is currently being established. Within the Green Party we will talk to members of Green Party Women and LGBTQ.

4) Surveys (provides data mainly for objective 1 and 2)

In total the RA will conduct 4 surveys. Two of them will be ‘party activist’ surveys undertaken at the national party conferences of LU and the Green Party. In order to maximise the response rate, the RA will supplement an online survey (permission to do this with LU has already been checked by the PI) with a face to face one in situ. The purpose of these surveys will be to gather data on the demographics of those participating and their attitudes towards gender and race. In addition we will use it to assess to what extent our working definition of populism (e.g. as implicating an opponent that is distinct from ‘the people’) resonates with the responses of our party activists. The RA will also do two ‘elite’ surveys, one of each party, to assess their connections with external social networks that represent minority or marginalised constituencies. This will give us a sense of how embedded these elites are in broader social movement activism in Britain, particularly around feminist/anti-racist politics.

Significance and Originality:

This project is significant for three reasons:

Politically, populism, in general and left-wing populism, in particular, is a highly topical and relevant issue. While many commentators see it as a threat to democracy (Baggini 2013), others suggest that, under certain circumstances, it may be an antidote to the current state of apathy, galvanising people to re-engage with politics (Kaltwasser 2014, p. 9). Either way, the rise of left-wing populism as a social force has implications for the shape and resilience of representative democracy in Europe. Our project, if funded, will be the first systematic study of left-wing populism in Britain and, as such, will provide an in-depth examination of a growing national phenomenon, which can serve as a point of comparison with other European cases in future research.

Empirically, this detailed mapping of left populism in the context of Left Unity, the Green Party and ‘celebrity activism’ will add to the very limited literature on the subject, especially in the context of Europe. Moreover, ours will be the first effort to study left-wing populism from a feminist perspective, i.e., to raise questions about the role of gender and race in its constitution and performance, despite the often highly “gendered” character of many populist politicians and movements.

Theoretically, while there is a rich literature conceptualising populism, its insights remain dispersed across different disciplines and need to be brought into conversation with each other. Moreover, the literature tends to be very abstract and needs to be challenged and refined in light of in-depth empirical research. This project will engage with both of these tasks.

Outputs:

It is anticipated that the project will give rise to a total of five peer-reviewed articles in academic journals. What follows is a provisional breakdown:

1) A theoretical paper on conceptualisations of populism, co-authored by PI and co-I. Target journals: Political Theory, Contemporary Political Theory.

2) A paper analysing the gendered and racial dynamics of left-wing populism across our three cases, co-authored by PI and co-I. Target journals: Gender and Politics, International Feminist Journal of Politics.

3) A paper offering a broad mapping of the constituent elements of left-wing populism across our cases, co-authored by PI, co-I and RA. Target journals: Political Studies, British Journal of Politics and International Relations.

4) A paper analysing and comparing "populist" and "non-populist" forms of left politics in contemporary Britain.
5) A paper situating our study in relation to analyses of left populism in Southern Europe and Latin America, exploring points of similarity and difference. Target journals: *Government and Opposition, Comparative Politics*.

The PI, co-I and RA will also co-author a monograph on left-wing populism, focussing on theoretical aspects and its empirical manifestations in Britain. We will target Cambridge University Press as they have demonstrated an interest in the subject (e.g. Mudde and Kaltwasser 2013).

Further outputs shall include:

- A dataset on perceptions of left-wing populism among party activists, compiled by the RA
- At least four comment pieces for websites such as *Open Democracy* and *The Conversation*, using our academic knowledge to intervene in public political debates. The PI has already written for *The Conversation* and *The Guardian*, and so has experience of writing for broader audiences.
- A twitter feed to disseminate findings (the PI is a seasoned twitter user).
- Presentations at three academic conferences. These include the 2016 Political Studies Association Conference in Brighton (attended by the RA); the 2016 Mancepol political theory workshops in Manchester (attended by PI, co-I and RA); and the 2017 Feminist and Women’s Studies Association conference (attended by the PI and co-I).
- A three day workshop on left-wing populism in Leeds University, summer 2017 (funding to be sought from University of Leeds).

References


Mudde, Cas and Kaltwasser, Cristobal Rovira (2015). 'Vox Populi or Vox Masculini? Populism and Gender in Northern Europe and South America. Patterns of Prejudice, advance online publication.


Penny, Laurie (2013). 'Laurie Penny on The Eton Scholarship Question: This is How the British Elite are Trained to Think'. http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/05/eton-scholarship-question-how-british-elite-are-trained-think. Accessed 18/03/15.


Abstract

Left-wing populism is becoming a significant trend in European politics, yet it is largely overlooked in academic studies of populism. Against this backdrop, the project has two aims. First, we seek to carry-out an in-depth investigation of left-wing populism in contemporary Britain in two domains: (1) left political parties (the Greens and Left Unity) and (2) left-wing ‘celebrity activism’ (reflected in the discourses and practices of politiced media personalities e.g. Owen Jones, Russell Brand). Second, we aim to critically interrogate the politics of left-wing populism by mapping the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion that shape and sustain it.

Context

It has been widely argued that we are witnessing an unprecedented upsurge of populist forms of politics across Europe, amidst growing mistrust of representative democracy, and a widespread “anti-politics” sensibility among European electorates. Whilst xenophobic and far-right forms of populism have been extensively studied and discussed, left-wing populism remains poorly understood, despite being increasingly influential in Britain and across Europe. For instance, Syriza in Greece has recently assumed power, whilst Podemos is in contention to become the next governing party in Spain. In the UK, the recent practices and pronouncements of Ed Miliband, the Green Party, anti-austerity movements, and left-wing “celebrities” such as Owen Jones and Russell Brand have all been cited as evidence of a burgeoning left-wing populism in Britain.

Against this backdrop, the project seeks to understand left-wing populism as an emerging and significant form of politics, by mapping its constituent elements and interrogating the gendered and racialised dynamics of inclusion/exclusion that shape it. Underpinned by an understanding of populism as a distinctive form of political practice, our project encompasses three case studies. The first is Left Unity, a new party founded in 2013 by Ken Loach and other left activists who want to offer a left alternative to mainstream British politics. The second is the Green Party, whose membership is now flourishing (with a 28% increase this year) and which has been described by sceptics as ‘a UKIP of the left’. Our third case study involves what we call ‘left-wing celebrity activism’, which encompasses several left-wing media personalities, including comedian and activist Russell Brand, writer Laurie Penny and Guardian writer Owen Jones, all of whom have self-consciously set themselves the task of ‘popularising’ left-wing ideas.

Objectives

This project will pursue four general lines of inquiry, each generating its own set of questions.

First, we seek to empirically map different manifestations of left-wing populism in Britain. We ask: what does British left-wing populism ‘look’ and ‘sound’ like? Who are the key actors; what are they saying and doing; how are they saying and doing it? In what ways do identity markers such as gender, race, class and sexuality constitute left-wing populism?

Second, we shall interrogate left-wing populism as a site of inclusionary/exclusionary dynamics, by asking what role gender and race play in shaping the discourses and socio-political practices of activists across our three cases.

Third, we shall compare the similarities and/or differences of our cases of left-wing populism and then ask how they differ from the ‘non-populist’ left in Britain.

Finally, our project shall contribute to conceptualisations of left-wing populism. We shall examine the extent to which our conceptualisation of populism as a political practice enables us to explore important aspects of this phenomenon that other conceptualisations do not.

Our responses to each of these research questions shall underpin a range of outputs from the project, including five peer-reviewed journal articles, a co-authored monograph, and a range of comment pieces for outlets such as Open Democracy and The Conversation.

Significance and originality

This project is significant for three reasons:

Politically, populism, in general and left-wing populism, in particular, is a highly topical and relevant issue. While many commentators see it as a threat to democracy, others suggest that it may galvanise people to re-engage
with politics. Our project will therefore help ascertain the extent to which left-wing populism may help rejuvenate democratic politics in Britain.

Empirically, this detailed mapping of left populism in the context of Left Unity, the Green Party and ‘celebrity activism’ will add to the very limited literature on the subject, especially in the context of Europe. Moreover, ours will be the first effort to study left-wing populism from a feminist perspective, i.e. to raise questions about the role of gender and race in its constitution and performance.

Theoretically, while there is a rich literature conceptualising populism, its insights remain dispersed across different disciplines and need to be brought into conversation with each other. Moreover, the literature tends to be very abstract and needs to be challenged and refined in light of in-depth empirical research. This project will engage with both of these tasks.

**Method**

We will adopt a multi-disciplinary approach to our study, drawing on feminist theory, cultural and political theory, social movement studies, and political science to inform our empirical analysis. These approaches will be brought to bear on the following four distinct methods with which we shall analyse our three case studies.

First, we shall undertake collection, coding and textual analysis of a broad range of written documents including books, party manifestos, and online and offline media. This will enable us to analyse the range of ways in which left-wing populism is articulated and discussed in different settings.

Second, we shall carry out participant observation at party conferences, and political and cultural events such as public debates and mass demonstrations. This will allow us to analyse in detail the forms of speech-and repertoires of performance characteristic of left-wing populism.

Third, we shall undertake semi-structured interviews with party leaders, party activists and ‘celebrity activists’. This will allow us to get a more precise sense of political actors’ perceptions of populism, its character and its limitations.

Fourth, we shall undertake a total of four surveys of party activists and party “elites”. These surveys will gather data on the demographics of those participating and their attitudes towards gender and race. In addition we will use them to assess to what extent our working definition of populism resonates with political activists.

**Why the Leverhulme Trust?**

This project fits closely with Leverhulme’s general mandate. It is highly ambitious insofar as the project will analyse an important form of political practice, i.e., left-wing populism, that has, thus far, only received sustained academic attention in the context of Latin America. Furthermore, our project rectifies the “gender-blindness” of existing analyses of left populism which is significant given the gendered nature of this form of politics and its importance for ascertaining the inclusivity (or otherwise) of left-wing populism. In addition, whilst the project focuses exclusively on the British context, it will generate the innovative theoretical and methodological foundations necessary for future comparative and cross-national research. Finally, by conceptualising populism as a form of political practice, the project reflects and develops the PI’s conviction that the performative aspects of politics – forms of dress, speech, comportment and gestures – are central to the analysis and practice of democratic politics. In seeking to develop this unorthodox but important avenue of analysis, the project stands to make a significant long-term contribution to political analysis.

More generally, the project builds on previous work by the PI and Co-I, but will also expand the skills and knowledge within the research team – the research assistant will be an expert in party and electoral politics – by requiring the PI (a political theorist) and Co-I (a social movement scholar) to engage with a body of scholarship that cuts across several disciplines including sociology, cultural studies, political theory, gender studies and political science. Overall, the project is interdisciplinary, broad ranging, and original in its approach, and therefore fits extremely well with the Leverhulme Trust’s mandate.

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<th>Staff Schedule – Principal Applicant</th>
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**Distribution of work:**
The PI will be responsible for managing the research team and will also undertake a substantial portion of the field work/research, especially in connection with the ethnographic and theoretical dimensions of the project. More concretely, the PI will conduct at least 20 interviews, engage in participant observation at several political and cultural events and shall assist the RA with the textual analysis of the documentation. The PI will contribute to the writing of all of the publications (see outputs for more details) with lead authorship being dependent on individual contributions.

Justification of replacement teaching: (if Applicable)

Under normal circumstances, the PI has 8 hours of lectures/seminar teaching per week. The project is a collaborative undertaking between the three members of the research team. Teaching relief for the PI is essential so as to allow him to liaise both in person and remotely with the PI and RA, so as to enable us to build up a knowledge base and a level of research momentum that will sustain the project once the PI and co-I resume their teaching duties in January 2016.

Recent and relevant publications

Monographs


Peer-reviewed journal articles


CV

Degree/Qualifications

Degree 1
Degree/Qualification: Subject MA : MA Ideology and Discourse Analysis (Department of Government)
Institution: University of Essex

Degree 2
Degree/Qualification: Subject BA : Politics and Sociology
Institution: University of Essex

Doctoral Degrees

Degree 1
Degree/Qualification : Institution PhD: University of Essex
Supervisor Name: Dr Jason Glynos

Former Employment

Employment 1
Job Title: Lecturer in Politics
Employer: University of Leeds

Employment 2
Job Title: Part-time Teacher in Political Theory
Employer: University of Essex

Employment 3
Job Title: ESRC Research Fellow
Employer: London School of Economics Gender Institute

Co-Applicant 1: Dr [redacted]

Total time to be spent on the project (hours per week): 12

Distribution of work
a) Research Activity
b) Authorship
c) Publication

The co-I shall undertake a workload similar to the PI in terms of content and quantity, with a focus on the ethnographic and theoretical dimensions. As with the PI, she shall conduct at least 20 interviews, engage in participant observation at several political and cultural events and shall assist the RA with the textual analysis of the documentation. The co-I will contribute to the writing of all of the proposed publications, with lead authorship dependent on individual contributions.

Justification of replacement teaching

Depending on the spread of her teaching, the Co-I could have up to 8 hours of lectures/seminar teaching per week in term 1 of 2015. Given that the Co-I is expected to work closely with the PI, especially at the start of the project in order to refine and consolidate its intellectual parameters and trajectory, a period of teaching relief will enable her to focus her efforts, liaise with the PI on a regular basis and, thus, build the momentum necessary to sustain the project once the PI and Co-I resume their teaching duties in January 2016.
Recent and relevant publications


Degree/Qualifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree/Qualification : Subject</td>
<td>MA : Politics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>York University, Toronto, Canada</td>
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<td>Institution</td>
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Doctoral Degrees

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<tr>
<td>Title of Thesis</td>
<td>Making Sense of Contemporary Social Movements</td>
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<td>Supervisor Name</td>
<td>Mark Hoffman</td>
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Former Employment

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job Title</td>
<td>Senior Lecturer in Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer</td>
<td>Exeter University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research Assistant 1: (Name Unknown)

Percentage of time devoted to the project (%): 100

Distribution of work
a) Research Activity
b) Authorship
c) Publication

The RA - who will be an expert in political parties - shall undertake the bulk of the day to day research, including the coding and textual analysis of the documents and the conducting of at least half of all the interviews. In addition, the RA shall engage in participant observation at several political events and conduct surveys at both the Green Party and Left Unity national conferences. The RA will co-author 3/5 journal articles, and will play a key role in the co-authorship of the monograph (see outputs for more details). Lead authorship will be dependent on individual contributions.