



**ERPI 2018 International Conference
Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World**

Conference Paper

**Authoritarian populism and the challenge to civil society:
What roles can international NGOs play in an emancipatory
rural politics?**

Martin Walsh, Kimberly Pfeifer and Nick Galasso

17-18 March 2018

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

Organized jointly by:



Cornell CALS
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

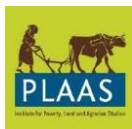


International
Institute of
Social Studies

Erasmus



**Institute of
Development Studies**



STEPScentre



In collaboration with:



**OPEN SOCIETY
FOUNDATIONS**



OXFAM

Solidariteit | Solidarité



**ROSA
LUXEMBURG
FOUNDATION**



**The Journal of
PEASANT
STUDIES**

Disclaimer: The views expressed here are solely those of the authors in their private capacity and do not in any way represent the views of organizers and funders of the conference.

March, 2018

Check regular updates via ERPI website: www.iss.nl/erpi



Authoritarian populism and the challenge to civil society: What roles can international NGOs play in an emancipatory rural politics?

Martin Walsh, Kimberly Pfeifer and Nick Galasso

1. Introduction

The following notes address the challenge laid down to scholar-activists in the ERPI framing paper:

“Imagining a new politics in and linked to rural areas is an essential political and research task. Emancipatory politics has to be generated through styles of research that are open, inclusive and collaborative, although always informed by theory and disciplined by empirical data. A commitment to emancipatory research of the rural should be situated in a deep historical perspective and attentive to hinterlands, margins and frontiers. It should be interdisciplinary, comparative and integrative, articulate the local and the global, attend to class, gender and generational dynamics, and utilise multiple approaches and methods to corroborate findings and to highlight the many different meanings and perspectives at play.” (Scoones et al. 2018, 12)

We are writing as researchers in an international NGO, Oxfam.¹ Our aim is to prompt discussion of the roles that international NGOs might play in, or in relation to, an emancipatory rural politics, and how they might best do this – assuming that there is a place for them at all. We will do so by outlining some of the trajectories of our own research on populism and its implications for NGO policy and practice, including the ways in which they work with civil society and seek to influence social and economic change at different scales.

It is important to emphasise at the outset that organisations such as our own are non-partisan and do not seek political change, other than promoting good governance and policies that contribute to the reduction of poverty and suffering in different contexts, including rural areas. In addition to working with local civil society, we aim to do so in partnership with international agencies, governments, the private sector, and other NGOs. It is our ability to bridge these different sectors and scales that is arguably our greatest asset (Green 2016).

2. Right-wing populism: analysis and implications

The political events of 2016 acted as a wake-up call to many international organisations, not least rights-based NGOs that were directly affected by the result of the Brexit referendum and the subsequent election of Donald Trump as President of the US. The irruption of right-wing populism in the global north posed – and continues to pose – a major challenge to international NGOs, one which has existential as well as strategic and tactical dimensions. This is especially so for organizations whose historical focus has been on tackling the causes and consequences of poverty and social injustice in the rural and rapidly urbanising global south. Authoritarian populism in these contexts has typically been viewed as a problem at the national level and addressed at that scale. Today’s realities indicate the need to treat populisms as an interconnected global phenomenon with deep social and economic roots and far-reaching impacts.

¹ Oxfam’s work on economic inequality is cited in the framing paper (Scoones et al. 2018, 4), but the full reference is not given. The ultimate source of “Oxfam 2017” is presumably the report prepared in advance of the annual Davos meeting, Hardoon 2017.

The rise of right-wing populism in the north challenges the internationalism underlying the mission of international NGOs and has threatened aid budgets. It has also undermined other components of the development consensus, including humanitarian help to refugees, the struggle for gender justice and the fight against climate change. The critical conjunctures of 2016 left many development practitioners and policymakers uncertain how to respond or even how to interpret these events and the mass of commentary about them.

The Oxfam Research Network was asked by senior management to help fill this gap. Beginning in July 2016, desk research was undertaken on both sides of the Atlantic and the findings discussed with a range of internal and external audiences. The resulting backgrounder, *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs* was published by Oxfam America last December (Galasso et al. 2017).

The focus of that paper is on the current resurgence of right-wing populism in the democracies of the global north. At its core is a review of relevant political and public opinion trends and the principal explanations that have been advanced for these. Using an economic analogy employed by some political scientists (Mudde 2015, 299; Inglehart and Norris 2016, 2; Mudde and Kaltwasser 2017, 97-118), we distinguished between different demand- and supply-side explanations, as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Explanations for the rise of right-wing populism (summary after Walsh 2018)

Demand-side explanations <i>Why are voters attracted to right-wing populism?</i>	Supply-side explanations <i>What is the populist right doing to attract them?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the disaffection of the ‘losers of globalisation’, lower- and middle-class voters whose incomes have stagnated as a negative consequence of economic globalisation • the negative impacts of other global economic trends, including technological and demographic change • reaction against progressive cultural values, including internationalism, feminism and LGBT rights • the impact of specific crises and shocks, including the global economic recession, the refugee crisis, and the perceived growth of ‘Islamic terrorism’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the specific and increasingly coordinated and targeted activities of right-wing politicians, parties, and think-tanks, including: • the promotion of divisive narratives, i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-elite and anti-establishment narratives, including distrust of mainstream parties and experts, cultural conservatism and misogyny; • anti-globalisation, including Euroscepticism and narrow nationalism; • anti-immigration/refugee narratives, xenophobia and Islamophobia • the manipulation of both mainstream and social media

Although we initially adopted this as a convenient typology of explanations, it proved more productive than originally envisaged. On the demand-side it enabled us to distinguish between two major classes of structural explanation – economic and cultural – and the impact of specific events. On the supply-side we drew attention to individual and collective agency, and highlighted the important role played by divisive narratives, propagated as moral panics via mainstream and social media. These polarising discourses define populism as the politics of ‘us vs. them’, and in effect they span both sides of the demand-/supply-side equation, being embedded in collective consciousness and promoted by populist parties and politicians.

While we indicated the existence of different political economic explanations, we did not attempt an in-depth structural analysis of our own, or try to establish a hierarchy of causes. We did, however, recognise that the blend of perspectives -- structure, event, agency and discourse -- generated an entangled web of causes that were not mutually exclusive. Equally importantly, we realised that they touch on almost every aspect of the work that Oxfam and other international NGOs do. We therefore used our overview of explanations as a springboard for outlining and discussing the principal implications for development NGOs of this kind (Galasso et al. 2017, 50-55).

As well as posing an existential threat to the sector by undermining public support and funding for aid, we argued that the rise of right-wing populism also presents a series of strategic and tactical challenges to international NGOs. In a conference presentation (Walsh 2017) and subsequent blog post, these were summarised under the following headings:

- **“Our values and identity.** What are the moral values that inform our work, and how do we find common ground with the audiences we seek to influence including those who hold different values?
- **Overall and campaign narratives.** What story or stories should we tell to express our values, and engage different audiences?
- **Evidence and research.** What role can evidence-informed influencing play in a world of populism and post-truth politics and distrust of experts?
- **Public engagement.** How should we engage with diverse publics, including those who distrust internationalism?
- **Political engagement.** What does this analysis mean for our engagement with political parties and politicians?” (Walsh 2018)

The post concluded:

“If we don’t address these questions effectively, there is a risk that growing distrust will undermine our ability to make the case for the values that we espouse. Alternative facts, fake news, and the emotionally-charged narratives that comprise it pose a direct challenge to evidence-informed policy-making, and so to our own practice.

To counteract this, international NGOs need to do much more than reaffirm their existing humanitarian values and commitment to collective and collaborative influencing and action. In addition to redoubling their efforts to tackle the drivers of poverty, inequality, disaffection and distrust, they must also work harder on developing and articulating alternatives.

As we argue in the paper, this includes using well-researched evidence not only to counter the polarising narratives that have become enshrined in public opinion, but also thinking more smartly about the framing and communication of our own messages, and how we can use them, alongside other influencing strategies, to help change entrenched attitudes and behaviours, not least by empowering people to make change happen themselves.” (Walsh 2018)

3. Authoritarian populism and the roles of international NGOs

Our published paper (Galasso et al. 2017) focuses on the rise of right-wing populism in the global north. As we pointed out, this has obvious implications for international NGOs working in the global south, especially if they are based in the north and/or dependent on funds raised there. The challenge to internationalism and aid budgets alone is a major source of concern, not just for NGOs, but the whole development sector, both government and non-government.

Ironically, some radical critics are equally unsympathetic, seeing international NGOs, for all their lofty ideals, as co-opted by an aid system that fosters continuing economic and political dependence. A lot of ink has been spilt on this last question. It was the subject of a spat that broke out in the summer of 2012 when Oxfam's Duncan Green (2012) took issue with the generalisations and lack of evidence in a working paper by Nicola Banks and David Hulme on "The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction" (2012).

While debate rumbled on, the authors joined forces with Michael Edwards and worked their argument into a journal paper (Banks et al. 2015). This revisited an earlier article (Edwards and Hulme 1996) and its contention that NGOs had become too dependent on donor funding. Their suggestion that large NGOs might nonetheless "build bridges between grassroots organizations and local and national-level structures and processes" (Banks et al. 2015, 707), is what many were already striving to do. In the case of international NGOs like Oxfam, this included working at transnational and global levels, as well as continuing to contribute to the NGO debate (Green 2015; Walsh 2015).

This debate recalls earlier critiques of "development discourse", its depoliticising effects, and the hope that "non-state forces and organizations", especially grassroots social movements, might offer a "counter-hegemonic" alternative (Ferguson 1990, 286-287; Escobar 1995: 223). Then, as now, NGOs were perceived as betwixt and between, "as evolving processes within complexes of competing and overlapping practices and discourses", that can embody resistance as well as compliance to dominant structures (Fisher 1997, 439).

The promise of resistance was most often identified with what Stuart Corbridge (1994, 94) called "the populist impulse" in development studies: Freirean conscientization (Freire 1968), participation and empowerment ("putting the last first", Chambers 1983), and the privileging of indigenous knowledge and practice (for example, Richards 1985). As Corbridge pointed out, this was also the line taken by Edwards in his own polemic on "The irrelevance of development studies" (1989), written when he worked for Oxfam.

The surge of right-wing populism in 2016 raised this issue in a very direct way for NGOs, especially those involved in campaigning. In our paper, we asked "whether or not – and if so how, and how explicitly – organizations should align with the values of left-wing populism" (Galasso et al. 2017, 51). Like populist parties, international NGOs sometimes present themselves as social movements, or speak of their campaigns as building one.² These are laudable ambitions, but there are clear risks to campaigning in ways that appear to offer support to one political party or faction over another. This can and does lead to accusations of partisanship and bias, the application of sanctions, and restrictions on civic space and NGOs' freedom to operate.

There are also risks associated with negative campaign tactics, such as the use of anti-elite narratives by campaigners, which echo the polarising discourses deployed by populists on both the left and right. The danger here is that adversarial and negative rhetoric will backfire, give ammunition to opponents, and feed into a politics of blame that bolsters their arguments.

These observations serve as a reminder that the analytic frame that we used to examine right-wing populism can also be readily applied to left-wing and other populisms, as it is by the political scientists we borrowed it from (originally Mudde 2015). While we are only just beginning to extend our analysis in different ways (see, for example, Bagley et al. 2018), Oxfam has, of course, considerable experience of working in countries with populist regimes of different kinds. We can draw on this experience, as well as our existing analysis, to offer some general propositions about the role of international NGOs in contexts of authoritarian populism and what this means for their relationship with an emancipatory rural politics.

² "Oxfam is a global movement of millions of people who share the belief that, in a world rich in resources, poverty isn't inevitable." Oxfam GB website. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://www.oxfam.org.uk/what-we-do>).

The recent literature suggests that to remain relevant in today's increasingly complex environment, international NGOs must be much smarter and more agile than many of them have been in the past (Green 2015, 10-16, citing, among others, Booth 2013; Ramalingam 2013; Roche and Hewett 2013; Slim 2013; Edwards 2014; 2016; 2018; and Bond 2015). The prevalence of authoritarian populism makes this a more challenging and urgent task, not least because it threatens basic human values and rights (Roth 2017).

In response, international NGOs must reaffirm their collective values and redouble their efforts to both defend and put these into practice. This means continuing to tackle the structural and other causes of poverty and injustice that are also among the demand-side drivers of populism, while simultaneously working to develop civic space and counter the divisive discourses that are manipulated by populist politicians on the supply-side. Like Oxfam, many NGOs have been doing these things anyway, though perhaps without the focus on framing, narratives and messaging that our research on populism has added.

Different NGOs, of course, will have their own emphases, reflecting their different mandates, geographies, and theories of change. The mix between emergency response work, longer term development, and campaigning varies from one organisation to another.³ It has also changed over time, as international NGOs have sought to build resilience and prevent man-made disasters from happening rather just reacting to them, while also moving away from traditional service delivery models of aid to smarter combinations of learning on the ground and influencing policy and practice in partnership with others.

In addition to playing the bridging and supporting roles that many observers have recommended, international NGOs can and should make the most of their scale. "Scale allows organizations to experiment and exchange ideas between countries and programmes. When it comes to influence, small is seldom beautiful – governments are more likely to listen to bigger players given their reach, particularly when they have [...] direct programming and staff on the ground" (Green 2015, 15-16). As Oxfam's work around the annual Davos meetings has shown, they are also much more likely to exercise global influence when their advocacy is based on well-researched evidence (Smith 2016). Smaller NGOs typically lack the research capacity which this requires.

The work of many international NGOs inevitably spans both rural and urban areas. Action around issues that are largely rural in nature usually requires influencing at national, and in many cases, regional and international scales. We can illustrate this by referring to our own Oxfam Influencing Strategy on Shrinking and Shifting Civic Space, which identifies populism, authoritarianism and nationalism, considered collectively, as one of the principal drivers of shrinking civic space (Oxfam 2017, 9).⁴ Other drivers include the rising inequality and geopolitical developments that are identified in our own paper as demand-side drivers of populism (2017, 7-8). Its policy messages therefore include the following:

"It is particularly concerning that space for civic action is shrinking when inequality, polarisation and fragility worldwide are increasing. These are the spaces in which it is most crucial that people's voices are heard. If citizens are not able to organize and hold the government and private sector accountable, we will see a widening gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots', leading to more distrust in institutional politics and elites and deepening polarisation and insecurity in our societies." (Oxfam 2017, 23)

The strategy's vision is that "All citizens and civic organisations, especially marginalised groups, have the space to speak out, assemble and organise, and are able to influence governments to ensure the full realisation of their rights" (2017, 10). Its theory of change envisages supporting civil society and

³ For the breakdown of Oxfam spending on these and other activities see <https://www.oxfam.org.uk/>.

⁴ "Civic space" is used in preference to "civil society space" because it refers more clearly to space for all citizens, rather than just institutionalised civil society in the form of NGOs and CSOs (Oxfam 2017, 4).

strengthening civic space in a variety of ways, including working with regional and global actors and institutions to uphold global norms on civic space (2017, 13).

This is only one of many different aspects of Oxfam’s influencing work, though one of the most relevant to the development of an emancipatory rural politics. Recall too that our purpose is much broader: “Influencing is not an end in itself, but is a means to an end – namely, positive and sustainable change at scale in the lives of people living in poverty – and is applicable in all the countries where we work” (Golding and Mayne 2017).

This is perhaps an appropriate observation on which to end these notes, and to open the analysis and suggestions that we have made to wider discussion.

Bibliography

1. Bagley, C., L. Glenna, L. Jensen, and K. Pfeifer. 2018. “Making sense of frustration with globalization, rising anti-establishment sentiment, and the appeal of populist rhetoric in rural communities across mature democracies.” Draft think piece for TARRN 2018 annual conference, Trans-Atlantic Rural Research Network, Cornell University, March 23-25.
2. Banks, N., and D. Hulme. 2012. “The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction.” *BWPI Working Paper* 171. Manchester: Brooks World Poverty Institute, University of Manchester.
3. Banks, N., D. Hulme, and M. Edwards. 2015. “NGOs, states, and donors revisited: still too close for comfort?” *World Development* 66: 707-718.
4. Bond. 2015. *Tomorrow’s World: How might megatrends in development affect the future roles of UK-based INGOs?* London: Bond. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (https://www.bond.org.uk/data/files/publications/Tomorrows_World_230215.pdf).
5. Booth, D. 2013. *Facilitating Development: an arm’s length approach to aid*. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI). Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8791.pdf>).
6. Chambers, R. 1983. *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*. London: Routledge.
7. Corbridge, S. 1994. “Post-Marxism and post-colonialism: the needs and rights of distant strangers.” Pp. 90-117 in *Rethinking Social Development: Theory, Research and Practice*, edited by D. Booth. Harlow: Longman.
8. Edwards, M. 1989. “The irrelevance of development studies.” *Third World Quarterly* 1(1): 116-135.
9. Edwards, M. 2014. *Civil Society* (3rd edition). Cambridge: Polity Press.
10. Edwards, M. 2016. “What’s to be done with Oxfam?” *Transformation*, August 1. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/michael-edwards/what-s-to-be-done-with-oxfam>).
11. Edwards, M. 2018. “What’s to be done with Oxfam, part 2?” *Transformation*, February 15, Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/michael-edwards/what-s-to-be-done-with-oxfam-part-2>).
12. Edwards, M., and D. Hulme. 1996. “Too close for comfort? The impact of official aid on nongovernmental organizations.” *World Development* 24(6): 961-973.
13. Escobar, A. 1995. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
14. Ferguson, J. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: “Development,” depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
15. Fisher, W.F. 1997. “Doing good? The politics and anti-politics of NGO practices.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26: 439-464.
16. Freire, P. 1970 [1968]. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (translated by M. Ramos). New York: Continuum.

17. Galasso, V.N., G.N. Feroci, K.Y. Pfeifer, and M. Walsh. 2017. *The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs*. Washington DC: Oxfam America. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/research-publications/the-rise-of-populism-and-its-implications-for-development-ngos/>).
18. Golding, S. and R. Mayne. 2017. "Influencing for social justice: nudge, shove, show or shout?" Oxfam Views & Voices blog, Oxfam Policy & Practice website, July 24. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://views-voices.oxfam.org.uk/general/influencing/2017/07/influencing-for-social-justice>).
19. Green, D. 2012. "What can we learn from a really annoying paper on NGOs and development?" *From Poverty to Power* blog, Oxfam Policy & Practice website, August 15, 2012. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-can-we-learn-from-a-really-annoying-paper-on-ngos-and-development/>).
20. Green, D. 2015. *Fit for the Future? Development trends and the role of international NGOs*. Oxford: Oxfam GB. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/fit-for-the-future-development-trends-and-the-role-of-international-ngos-556585>).
21. Green, D. 2016. *How Change Happens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
22. Hardoon, D. 2017. *An Economy for the 99%: It's time to build a human economy that benefits everyone, not just the privileged few*. Oxford: Oxfam International. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/an-economy-for-the-99-its-time-to-build-a-human-economy-that-benefits-everyone-620170>).
23. Inglehart, R.F., and P. Norris. 2016. *Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic Have-Nots and Cultural Backlash*. HKS Faculty Research Working Paper No. RWP16-026, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://research.hks.harvard.edu/publications/getFile.aspx?Id=1401>).
24. Mudde, C. 2015. "Populist radical right parties in Europe today." Pp. 295-307 in *Transformations of Populism in Europe and the Americas: History and Recent Tendencies*, edited by J. Abromeit, B.M. Chesterton, G. Marotta, and Y. Norman. London: Bloomsbury.
25. Mudde, C., and C.R. Kaltwasser. 2017. *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
26. Oxfam. 2017. *Oxfam Influencing Strategy on Shrinking and Shifting Civic Space*. Unpublished. (A briefing paper discussing the analysis and main propositions is currently in draft, and will be published in 2018.)
27. Ramalingam, B. 2013. *Aid on the Edge of Chaos: Rethinking International Cooperation in a Complex World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
28. Richards, P. 1985. *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution: Ecology and Food Production in West Africa*. London: Hutchinson.
29. Roche, C., and A. Hewett 2013. "The end of the golden age of international NGOs?" Australian Council for International Development (ACFID)/University Linkage Conference, November 21-22. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://practiceforchange.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/the-end-of-the-golden-age-of-ngos.pdf>).
30. Roth, K. 2017. "The dangerous rise of populism: global attacks on human rights values". Pp. 1-14 in *World Report 2017: Events of 2016*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved February 26 (<https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017>).
31. Scoones, I., M. Edelman, S.M. Borras Jr., R. Hall, W. Wolford, and B. White. 2018. "Emancipatory rural politics: confronting authoritarian populism." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(1): 1-20.
32. Slim, H. 2013. *NGOs and the Future: a think piece*. Australian Council for International Development (ACFID). Retrieved February 26, 2018 (https://acfid.asn.au/sites/site.acfid/files/resource_document/NGOsinthefuture.pdf).
33. Smith, L. 2016. "Researching the killer fact that highlighted global economic inequality." Oxford: Oxfam GB. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/researching-the-killer-fact-that-highlighted-global-economic-inequality-620162>).
34. Walsh, M. 2015. "Do we really need NGOs, and if so which ones?" Presentation to the symposium on Global Governance and the Politics of Aid, University of Bradford, Bradford, May 1. Retrieved

- February 26, 2018
(http://www.academia.edu/21754094/Do_we_really_need_NGOs_and_if_so_which_ones).
35. Walsh, M. 2017. "The rise of populism and its implications for influencing." Presentation to the Evidence for Influencing conference, Oxfam Research Network, Soesterberg, the Netherlands, October 23. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (http://www.academia.edu/35161773/The_rise_of_populism_and_its_implications_for_influencing).
36. Walsh, M. 2018. "What does populism mean for NGO policy and practice?" Oxfam Views & Voices blog, Oxfam Policy & Practice website, January 10. Retrieved February 26, 2018 (<https://views-voices.oxfam.org.uk/general/influencing/2018/01/what-does-populism-mean-for-ngo-policy-and-practice>).

ERPI 2018 International Conference
Authoritarian Populism and the
Rural World

17-18 March 2018

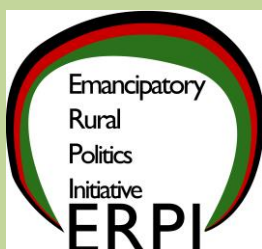
International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)
The Hague, Netherlands

About the Author(s)

Martin Walsh is a Senior Researcher in Oxfam GB and a Senior Member of Wolfson College, Cambridge, and has been a Principal Scientist in the Natural Resources Institute in the University of Greenwich, an Affiliated Lecturer in the Department of Social Anthropology in the University of Cambridge, and a Research Fellow in the School of African and Asian Studies in the University of Sussex.

Kimberly Pfeifer is the Head of Research at Oxfam America, co-founder and Chair of the Oxfam Research Network, and currently a Visiting Fellow in Development Sociology and Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future at Cornell University.

Nick Galasso is Oxfam America's Acting Director of Research, a Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow, and in 2012-14 was an American Council of Learned Societies Public Fellow. All three are members of the Oxfam Research Network and co-authors of the forthcoming Oxfam America Research Backgrounder on The Rise of Populism and its Implications for Development NGOs.



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.

For more information see: <http://www.iss.nl/erpi>
or email: emancipatoryruralpolitics@gmail.com