

di Tatiana Moutinho - Dal convegno "La sinistra al tempo dei populismi"

In a moment of a clear rise/establishment of far-right forces throughout Europe and the world and on the eve of a European Parliament elections and, the workshop "Left in populist times", organized by transform! Europe, assumes particular importance and relevance.

Over one and a half days many interesting and plural views were shared at La Poderosa (Turin, Italy), from which some aspects deserved particular focus.

One of the questions addressed was of we are truly living a "populist moment" that veils de right/left divide for the sake of the building of a new political identity (the people, many versus the few...).

Under the scope of many participations was the debate on "populism" as an ideology or a political ideal or, rather, a resource, a communicational instrument or strategy to build narratives. Clearly, populism is being clearly and successfully appropriated by the far right. This is the reason why, when the debate is on populism, we inevitably discuss the far-right, although some (opinion makers, the media...), in an opportunistic manner, make quite an effort in the banalization of the term "populism" (and arguing that there is a right as well as a "left" populism), which serves a clear purpose: the preservation of the political centre.

Populism and the far-right come hand in hand. And not only populism is a characteristic of the far-right across Europe and the world, but also each time the centre (both centre left and centre right) drift towards populism, this inevitably leads to the empowerment and strengthen of the far-right, allied to the abandonment of social-democracy, the neoliberal consensus, etc.

On the other hand, a populist approach by the left remains to be proven to be effective (as we can observe in Podemos, a bottom-up open democratic construction that is sailing rough seas at the moment) or even useful (as in the case of France Insoumise, whose populist discourse can sometimes easily slide into very unfortunate - to say the least - statements such as "migration promotes wages' dumping", dangerously overshadowing the fact that it was the decades of neo-liberal austerity policies that effectively promoted precariousness leading to the lowering of wages and abolition of labour rights, allied to the fortress Europe who dooms migrants to be the European precarious of the precarious).

One of the central political questions within the Left is how can we, as plural and diverse leftists, oppose populism and the far-right growth? As anti-capitalists, we shall not take this as a "one million euro question" and commit the error of seeking for a straightforward and clear answer. Yet, as leftist, we do recognize that with the international and intersectional feminist wave on the rise, an important political subject emerges that is able to confront,

simultaneously, neo-liberalism and the far-right and its inherent populism. The same applies to the new wave of environmental struggles, with an astonishing involvement of the youngest, which clearly questions Capitalism and challenges the idea of “infinite growth”. In this regard, perhaps we should regret the poor participation of women and young people in this workshop (both invited speakers and the audience).

We, as transform! Europe, aim at providing and contributing to spaces of debate that lead to a political and social construction within the diversity of the European left forces. It is by respecting the specificities within a plural Left, by laboriously and arduously building bridges that unite the points in common, that the Left – as a whole – can come up with a robust, effective and alternative project to this neo-liberal European project that has failed the people and paves the way for xenophobic, racist, nationalist forces across Europe.

As facilitator of Cooperation Strategies for Southern Europe” transform’s project, we aim at opposing the South-North European divide created by the current the European integration. This project is based on this idea that it is still in Southern Europe where left-wing parties, trade unions and social movements remain strong and socially robust, and that it is through cooperation between these different radical and progressive forces that an alternative programme confronting the current European Union project can/may emerge.