

Scientific Report

by Dr. Senka Anastasova

after the completion of the Short Term Scientific Mission at the
School of Political Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece

Research topic: THEORY OF POPULISM AND MEDIA ANALYSIS (Exploring social-scientific research methodology and epistemology related to the phenomenon of populism today)

During this research visit at the School of Political Sciences of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki with Prof. Dr. Stavrakakis we set out to discuss the core aspects of the phenomenon of populism and political communication drawing on recent socio-economic contexts and developments in Greece and Skopje. We have registered the way populism is directly related to the complexities of democracy, especially the clash between the 'pragmatic' and 'redemptive' poles active in political debates.

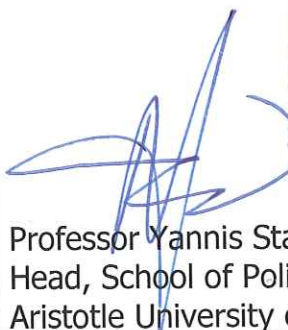

Our discussions focused on discourse analysis, especially the ways in which references to the concept of 'the people' and popular sovereignty are articulated. Apart from having a series of meetings the mission also encompassed exchange of research material and processing of this material in a joint effort, as well as meetings with PhD students to reflect on their doctoral research and relevant findings.

As far as results are concerned the following can be singled out:

- We compared our way of working with students and their research projects, related to Political Discourse Analysis (a course that Prof. Stavrakakis teaches) and Discourses of Power (a course that I teach).
- We have explored in detail the etymology of 'populism' in its historical development and its political implications that may form the focus of future research.
- We have exchanged views on a refocusing of research efforts to capture the economic and socio-cultural aspects of populism in conjunction with its political dimensions.

- One of the most important empirical results in terms of future collaboration was the desire to explore the link between populist mobilization and Debt Societies.
- In this context, we have started designing a comparative analysis to be conducted in both Greece and Skopje related to a multi-level understanding of populism. This would encompass economic and higher education protests as well as the activity of particular (leading) populist political figures in Skopje and Greece.
- Finally, we have made progress in linking political and aesthetic dimensions of populist discourse in order to arrive at a comprehensive account of how populism works. Here discussions about high/low culture and 'kitsch' are of paramount importance and would be located at the epicenter of our efforts.

Finally, we have explored in detail ways in which this research program can be reflected in tangible initiatives such as (1) the organization of relevant panels in the context of PSA and APSA international conferences; (2) the organization of lectures in our respective universities; (3) the exchange of students and the organization of workshops.

<p>Best wishes,</p> <p>Assistant Professor Dr. Senka Anastasova</p> <p>Thessaloniki & Skopje</p> <p>October 2016</p>	<p>I confirm that this has been a productive visit that produced results on a variety of levels as detailed in this report.</p> <p>Thessaloniki, 1 November 2016</p>   <p>Professor Yannis Stavrakakis Head, School of Political Sciences Aristotle University of Thessaloniki</p>
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