

Call for papers

The Construction of 'Us' and 'Them': Discourses on populism and nationalism



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A key theme in politics, which translates to many fields of study, is identification – or disidentification. 'Us' and the sometimes equally relevant 'them' are articulated at various levels from the family circle, to the neighbourhood, local identifications, sub-cultural groups, political parties and social movements, and further to the level of nationhood and beyond. These may overlap or draw from each other in the process of their articulation. One of the cases in contemporary Europe, are the overlapping identifications with the EU, nation, region and the locality. They may also deal with populism, exclusion and minorities - or forms of solidarity.

A useful tool for recognising and understanding the logics operating in these processes is discourse theory. The key note speaker at the conference is professor Ernesto Laclau - an author of, most recently, *On Populist Reason* (2005), and also *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy; Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (Verso: London, 1985, with Chantal Mouffe), *New Reflections on Revolutions of Our Time* (1990), and *Emancipation(s)* (1996). Laclau's discourse theory have made major contributions in the field of politics, but also history, literary studies and sociology, as well as area studies. This is his first visit to Finland.

The conference seeks to discover different cases, logics and phenomena in the construction of 'us' and 'them'. Papers addressing nationhood and populism are particularly sought for, but other 'we' groups may also be studied, with focus on either empirical or theoretical problems - or a combination of both.

The aim of the conference is to allow a truly interdisciplinary forum for the study of these questions. The conference language is English. Abstracts for presentations (ca. 150 words) should be emailed to the conference organiser by 15 March 2007. The conference is organised by Emilia Palonen on behalf of the Academy of Finland funded research project *Nations and Their Others: The Finns and the Hungarians since 1900*, led by Heino Nyysönen. It is supported by the Aleksanteri Institute, the Department of Political Science and the Collegium Helsinki at the University of Helsinki.

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