



17th ESDN Workshop

Transformation towards Sustainability in Times of Rising Populism

Eric Mulholland

Workshop
Report

Berlin
23 - 24 May
2019

This report is published as a work of the ESDN Office. The opinions expressed do not reflect the official views of ESDN Steering Group countries.

Please cite this publication as:

Mulholland, E (2019). "Transformation towards Sustainability in Times of Rising Populism", 17th ESDN Workshop Report, May 2019, ESDN Office, Vienna.

AUTHOR: Eric Mulholland, ESDN Office

CONTACT: ESDN Office
Institute for Managing Sustainability
Vienna University of Economics and Business
Welthandelsplatz 1, A-1020 Vienna, Austria
esdn-office@sd-network.eu
+43-1-31336-4807

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Opening Session	4
Session 1: Setting the Scene of Populism and Sustainability	6
Populism and sustainability policies: frames, causes and effects.....	6
The Dark Side of Sustainability: Eco-Populism and the Deception of Simple Solutions	8
Session 2: The Rise of Populism in Europe	10
Populism: causes and counter strategies	10
Comparative Analysis of Populism in the Nordic Countries	11
Table Group discussions and Plenary Debate with speakers on populism and SD from evidence and practice	13
Dinner Speech: Sustainable Development - Part of the problem or rather part of the solution when it comes to populism?	15
Opening Day 2	17
Session 3: Reactions of Sustainability Policy to Rising Populism	18
Populism and Sustainable Development Policy in Europe.....	18
Interactive Table Discussions	19
Workshop Closure	21

Introduction

This ESDN Workshop Report provides information and documentation of the inputs, discussions, and outcomes of the 17th ESDN Workshop, entitled “Transformation towards Sustainability in Times of Rising Populism”, which took place in Berlin on 23 – 24 May 2019, in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety.

The objectives of the Workshop were to provide an in-depth exploration and lines of explanation of the rise of populism in Europe over the past few years and the role it plays in the policy-making process with respect to sustainable development and sustainability policy, especially with regard to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDGs. The Workshop sought to impart knowledge to participants on the general outlook of populism in Europe and seek to define common concepts of populism and focus on how populism affects sustainability policy in practice.

A combination of keynote speakers and interactive plenary and table discussions sought to illuminate some of the challenges that environmental and sustainable development policy faces from populist parties and populist rhetoric.

In total, the 17th ESDN Workshop hosted 50 participants from 13 countries. The Workshop began with an opening and orientation session, which was followed by 3 sessions that took place over two half-days:

23 May, 13:30 – 18:30

Session 1: Setting the Scene of Populism and Sustainability

Session 2: The Rise of Populism in Europe

24 May, 09:00 – 13:00

Session 3: Reactions of Sustainability Policy to Rising Populism

The full documentation of the 17th ESDN Workshop can be accessed via the [ESDN Website](#), where the following documents are available for download: 1) Workshop Agenda; 2) Workshop Discussion Paper; 3) PowerPoint presentations of all the keynote speakers; and 4) Workshop Report.

Opening Session

The opening session included a welcome address from a representative of the Germany Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the ESDN Co-chairs.

Mr. Dirk Meyer, Head of Department in the Central Department, Administration, Budget, Research and Digitalization of the Germany Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, opened the 17th ESDN Workshop. He began by giving a brief history of the ESDN, focusing on how the Network has always been about learning from one another regarding sustainable development and good practice cases and about the need to present multilateral decisions with respect to sustainable development. He also mentioned the previous ESDN Workshop, which took place in Berlin in November 2018 on the topic of communication and the SDGs as being a very good topic that fueled many useful discussions and that had many questions on how to do this effectively. He expressed his sincere wishes that the 17th ESDN Workshop will also lead to insights being gained regarding the topic of rising populism in Europe.

With respect to populism, Mr. Meyer began by stating that it is a global phenomenon and a global challenge. The range that populism has is quite broad, as it encompasses both right-wing and left-wing aspects. In our present day and age, it is right-wing populism that is the main challenge for various aspects of policymaking and democracy, as more and more populist parties are gaining influence. This influence seems to be linked to structural changes in our societies, such as decreased industrialization and unemployment. Populists tend to use these structural changes to promote fear and insecurity, such as against refugees and foreigners. Populists also tend to focus on providing the public with simple solutions and simplistic views to solve complex problems and challenges. They also are very adept at using social media for propaganda.

However, while there is a trend of rising populism in the world and in Europe, there are also counter movements that have sprung up, such as the Friday's for Future movement, which protests government inaction on climate change.

In closing, Mr. Meyer cautioned that environmental policy has for too long focused on an elite discourse that has left people behind. A way to combat this would be to make sustainability policy stronger and to integrate a just transition to sustainability policy, for example for potential displacements in the job market in the fossil fuel industry, for example, in order to have realistic chances at transformation.

The ESDN Co-Chairs, **Mr. Wolfram Tertschnig** and **Ms. Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler** from the Austrian Federal Ministry for Sustainability and Tourism also welcomed participants on behalf of the ESDN. They shared that the topic of rising populism was chosen because the date of the Workshop was so close to the European Parliament elections and because given that Europe is seeing rising populism, it is important to understand the effects it has on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Mr. Tertschnig then took over and shared very briefly Austria's experience with populism and how that in 2017 there were elections for the Austrian President, which pitted a right-wing populist candidate, Norbert Hofer, against a former Green Party politician, Alexander Van der Bellen, with the latter winning the election. Mr. Tertschnig then alluded to the current scandal that had recently occurred in Austria regarding the Vice-Chancellor, Heinz-Christian Strache, from the populist FPÖ (Austrian Freedom Party), and the "Ibiza Video", commenting that the populists had shown exactly what is possible when they are in office; mainly showing everyone populism at its worst. He then shared that there would also be a no-confidence vote against the Austrian Chancellor, Sebastian Kurz, that will most likely take place in the next few days.

However, Mr. Tertschnig also cautioned that it is not just the populists that should be to blame for the failing of sustainable development. The way in which civil servants deliver their governance and on developing policies may also be a part of the problem.

Ms. Freytag-Rigler continued, saying that it is not necessarily so easy to distinguish the causes as to why countries do not honor climate goals, for example like Poland, hypothesizing that it is not necessarily a result of populist parties that are in charge, but rather a country's economic set-up, for instance, when a country's economy and employment relies heavily on coal.

She also mentioned that the ESDN should be used as a platform for all present to work on not only national positions regarding the implementation of the SDGs, but also towards the implementation of the SDGs in Europe and at the European level.

Session 1: Setting the Scene of Populism and Sustainability

Session 1 began with setting the scene of populism and sustainability. Two keynote presentations made up this session. The first keynote speaker, Mr. Klaus Jacob, presented on populism and sustainability policies: frames, causes and effects. Following Mr. Jacob's presentation was another keynote presentation by Mr. Fred Luks on the topic of sustainability's dark side: eco-populism and the deception of simple solutions. At the end of each keynote presentation there was a short question and answer session. Mr. Jacob's PowerPoint presentation can be found on the ESDN website.

Populism and sustainability policies: frames, causes and effects

Mr. Klaus Jacob was the first keynote presenter and presented on populism and sustainability policies: frames, causes and effects. He began by outlining the trend the world is seeing in the global rise of populism and authoritarianism and highlighted the that the priority issues for these movements have been economic integrations, migration and security, whereas climate, the environment, and sustainability have been paid far less attention so far. In an effort to spur discussions among the participants, Mr. Jacob posed two questions: 1) How does the environment and sustainability fit to the frames and narratives of populists?; and 2) What are the possible conclusions and strategies for environmental policies against the analysis of populism?

Mr. Jacob argued that populism is a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. While populism is difficult to define and the scope and degree of what constitutes populism can vary, there are some similarities:

- No substantial ideological core of populism
- Right-left dimension of limited explanatory value
- High degree of flexibility of positions implied in general will of the people
- Importance of nation and populace (and exclusion)
- Heartland as imagined territory with emotional ties and collective identity
- Neither critique of elites/establishment nor simplification is sufficient to qualify as populism, in addition postulate of unitary populace and will of people

When it comes to populism and politics, there is an overall critique of the political process:

- liberal, rational, pluralistic model of decision making does not reflect the will of the people, but instead dominated by an elite and dysfunctional
- Left populism: social democratic parties fail to represent interests of employees
- politics denounced as „dirty business“=> anti-politics
- Media and science perceived as part of elite/establishment
- Neglect of scientific findings as source for legitimization
- Ambiguity regarding participatory processes

Populists then use that to call for effective leadership and do so by communicating in a way that is dramatic, emotional and personal.

Mr. Jacob then discussed the interplay between populist ideology and the environment. He said that environmental policy feeds the narratives of populists:

- Environment policies as consensus of established parties as response to ‚objective‘ necessity
- Disregard of scientific findings / imbalanced consideration, e.g. benefits of climate change

- Environment policies do not meet own objectives
- Processes of participation are part of an elitist project
- Protection of global common goods and multilateralism ⇔ nativism
- ⇒ Environment / sustainability policies are not considering will of people
- ⇒ Protecting environment and sustainability as post-materialist, cosmopolitan and urban project

The issues that lead to the rise in populism tend to be:

- Economic causes: unemployment, inequalities, economic insecurity, retreat (or failure) of the state to protect precarious groups => supporters are underprivileged
- Cultural causes: increasing estrangement of people and governing, differences in language, single vs. plural identities, security vs. self-realization, backroom deals
- Populism as instrument: a) extremists parties make use of populism b) financially powerful interests make use of populism

When this is taken then in the context of the environment and environmental policy then it is seen as:

- Economic loser: Environment policies may impose additional costs, and increase inequalities
- Cultural estrangement: Environment policy as expression of post-materialist values, questioning of life-styles (automobiles, meat consumption, suburban single family house, tourism)
- Loss of statehood and security: by delegating responsibility to European or international level
- Lack of political debate: inter- and intra-party conflicts on the environment, domination by government (instead of parliament) contribute to backroom policies
- Anti-environment lobbying via populist parties?

Mr. Jacob then discussed the impacts that populism has:

- Coalition governments become difficult: anti-political, taboo-breaking, unwillingness to compromise. Inclusion in government does not necessarily lead to loss of credibility
- Positions of parties change: populist demands are taken up by other parties; political spectrum moves from center to the extremes
- Political culture, agenda and media change: as a result of provocative communication and use of social media and mass media
- Abolition or weakening of democratic institutions and gravedigger of democracy?
- Mobilization and self-assurance of liberal movements
- Pathologic (but curable and temporary) phenomena?

In closing, Mr. Jacob provided participants with some strategies:

- Dedicated counter-position: as the core of environment/sustainability is contested, mobilization of social groups in support of the environment (civil society, supporter of European integration, science)
- Focusing on social aspects of environment policies: emphasis on distributional impacts of non-action, mitigate distributional/income effects, support social practices of populist milieus
- Integration of compatible positions: Environment policy to protect homeland, nature protection, community based activities
- ⇒ Competition between concepts for environment policies?
- ⇒ Re-politicize the environment?

Q&A

One Workshop participant asked about the ways in which environmental policy could be integrated into populist narratives, so that there is a middle ground and a means to meet people halfway.

Mr. Jacob answered that integration can sometimes lead to compromises in other parts of environmental policy, which would then need to be considered and weighed.

Another question from a participant was in regards to the impact of populism on environmental policy.

Mr. Jacob answered that populism is very flexible and can adapt and represent different positions very quickly. This is often one of populism's strengths.

One participant commented that populism is not really an ideology, because no one says, "I am a populist" like they would with saying something similar to, "I am a conservative", or "I am a social democrat" or "I am a green party supporter", etc.

Mr. Jacob answered that this is because populists do not prescribe to specific ideologies, as they see the entire process as being broken. The speed at which populists can also adapt their positions most likely also contributes towards this.

Another participant also commented that everyone should be more precise in how they define populism, because they are too thinly defined, as it means everything and nothing at the same time. It may perhaps be more beneficial to think of populists and their rhetoric as being racist, xenophobic, etc., and to identify them as such.

Mr. Jacob answered by reminding participants that populism is not just about simplifying problems or criticizing the elites.

The Dark Side of Sustainability: Eco-Populism and the Deception of Simple Solutions

Mr. Fred Luks began his keynote speech by highlighting the issue that is present in the sustainable development community of using the rhetoric of finding simple solutions to complex problems and also in how we communicate sustainable development to the non-elites.

He continued by saying that those on the left side of the political spectrum normally blame populists for shunning liberals, but liberals do the exact same thing. Simple solutions are the core part of populist rhetoric. Populism also touches on the emotions of a society, such as nationalism at the expense of not including the out groups, such as foreigners, refugees, etc.

Mr. Luks then highlighted four areas that the sustainable development community thinks of as being good for the planet, but, in reality, may not be the case. The first point that Mr. Luks addressed was green growth, because saving the planet with growth is not working through technological advances and efficiency gains. There is no absolute delinking on the global scale between growth and CO₂ emissions. One must also always keep in mind the rebound effect when discussing efficiency gains, because as those very gains in efficiency could decrease CO₂ emissions if everything else remains constant. However, it is often the case that increases in efficiency have the opposite effect and allow people to use the technology to a further extent than before that could potentially offset the gains made and actually contribute to growing levels of CO₂ emissions, for example.

The second point Mr. Luks mentioned is post growth, which is in opposition to mainstream economics. However, as Mr. Luks argued, the first problem with post growth is that in one version of it, one should not wait for politics but that each individual person should change their life: if one wants to see change

regarding sustainable development, then one must change their life, meaning no more flying, no more driving and no more eating meat, etc.

The third mentioned point mentioned by Mr. Luks was donut economics or economics for the common good, which reflect post-capitalist positions. Economics for the common good is anti-elitist and it focuses on societal value rather than on individual people, which may run against Western culture.

Lastly, the SDGs are also a simple solution to a complex problem, according to Mr. Luks. The SDGs are very overambitious and inconsistent, as achieving one sub-goal may necessarily mean another sub-goal will not be met. Moreover, the 15-year long timeframe is rather unrealistic to deliver on everything the SDGs promise. That then begs the question of what happens after the world does not succeed in delivering the SDGs.

Apart from bringing some of sustainable development's weak points to the forefront, Mr. Luks also provided a few tips on what could be done to strengthen sustainable development. One tip was that sustainable development people should stop saying, "we", as it is not an effective strategy for sustainable development. Sustainable development people should also be critical of their own simplistic solutions and to setting goals that have a very real chance of not being fulfilled. Lastly, Mr. Luks suggested that being critical of the SDGs is also important and in identifying the weaknesses and shortcomings of the SDGs and try to strengthen them as best as possible.

Q&A

One participant asked a follow-up question about the ways in which the SDGs can be strengthened and how sustainable development people can interact with other non-sustainable development people with the goals that are present.

Mr. Luks answered that specific projects help immensely, such as those of businesses, because they have the potential to have a very big impact, as well as draw attention to specific issues.

Mr. Luks' presentation also made for a lively discussion among the participants regarding the importance of the SDGs, as many participants viewed them as essential and very important in the sustainable development debate and that without them, there would not really be a global movement to do something with respect to sustainable development. The SDGs do have an important part in sustainable development.

Session 2: The Rise of Populism in Europe

Session 2 of the Workshop looked into populism's rise in Europe in more detail and focused on some of its root causes and some useful counter strategies. Then the session looked at the Nordic countries and their history with populism and populist parties. This session also had two keynote speakers and presentations, which were both followed by a question and answer session. Mr. Karl Aiginger's PowerPoint presentation can be found on the ESDN website. The session concluded with interactive group work.

Populism: causes and counter strategies

Mr. Karl Aiginger's keynote presentation centered on populism: causes and counter strategies. He began by defining populism and populist parties as having these characteristics:

1. Binary polarization between „us“ and „them“. The ordinary, virtuous citizens and the corrupt self-serving elite.
2. Knowledge of the „true wants“ and the sole ability to serve them
3. Implicit assumption: natural, positive homogeneity of “our people”

In Europe the characteristics are more related to:

- My country first (nationalistic, nativist, egoistic)
- Polarization: we versus them (the corrupt elite)
- Post Truth Politics: post fact society, science is biased
- Pessimism, framing that “all was better in glorious past”
- Homogeneity endangered, takeover by Islam

The reasons for Europe's rise in populism can be mainly attributed to these factors:

- Low growth, unemployment, inequality
- Status loss (from middle class to underclass, recipients of transfers)
- Inability to boost personal income beyond parents
- Migrants take our jobs/regions
- “Population Exchange” ideology (identity movement)

Those who tend to vote for populist parties also share similar characteristics:

- Low incomes, but not lowest: „Middle class“ with apprenticeship or Matura
- Agrarian regions and elderly people (sometimes also young)

However, the trend towards supporting populist parties decreases with education level; income; international experiences; and share of migrants in the region and contact with them. Areas that see an increase in populism are rust belts; regions with decreasing populations; and entry ports.

Mr. Aiginger then went on to discuss the accelerators of populism, which cover a myriad of factors, such as:

- Migrants/exchange of population/globalization
- De-industrialization (Rust Belts)
- Unequal distribution, winner takes all society
- Science is not independent, it can prove anything
- Youth unemployment and forgotten regions, decline of population
- Education and wealth inherited from parents
- Too narrow specialization, no training for change

- Social media, echo chambers, missing integration

In order to fight populism, a successful counter strategy has four steps, according to Mr. Aiginger:

1. Correction of wrong analyses and pessimism (reframing), situation complex, but on average increasing incomes
2. Where to go and why together is better: vision 2030 optimism that Europe is best model for rich society, delivering wellbeing, jobs, decarbonization (better than China, US)
3. Game changing instruments and communication channels. Tax reform, regional policy connected to goals, no micro-interventions new communication channels: social media, NGOs (incl. Hungary, Turkey)
4. Look for a new narrative, after peace, serving emotions of citizens. A Europe that empowers and opens life chances

Q&A

One participant made the comment that as GDP rises, migrants migrate more. However, it is not a solution to not help the countries from which these migrants are migrating become more prosperous.

Mr. Aiginger agreed with the participant that it would not be a solution to not help a country to become more prosperous. He took the example of some African countries, where provided there is no war happening in a particular country's neighboring country, then migrants would prefer to migrate to the neighboring country, rather than make the journey to other countries, such as European countries.

Another participant commented on the fact that social media has no quality control and that the messages it conveys are inherently simplistic, as they are often limited in terms of space, such as Twitter with its 280-character limit. This type of social media attracts populists and they have a certain affinity for this type of communication platforms.

Mr. Aiginger agreed that social media tends to be captured by populists, but, at the same time, other interest groups can also use social media.

One participant asked a clarification questions regarding investing and consuming being able to improve the environment, which seems counter intuitive.

Mr. Aiginger answered that it is possible to have growth and still improve the environment and that it depends on where financial resources are invested and reinvested. He used the example of education systems in which people are trained to do one job, and postulated that this may not be a wise use of resources and reinvestment given how rapidly the world is changing.

Comparative Analysis of Populism in the Nordic Countries

Mr. Björn Fryklund's presentation made a comparative analysis of populism in the Nordic countries. However, before he provided insights into the Nordic countries, he gave the context for all of Europe with respect to populism over the past 20 years to help aid in the comparative analysis with the Nordic countries.

It is clear that parties with a right-wing populist profile have gained strength in Europe since the end of the 1990s. Indeed, the years 1999-2000 can be regarded as a turning point in Europe with regard to the participation of these parties in the political arena. During these years the Front National (FN) (The party changed their name 2018 to Rassemblement National) enjoyed considerable success in France and their leader Jean-Marie Le Pen challenged Chirac in the presidential election. In the same period, Jürgen Haider's FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) made significant gains in Austria to the extent that the

party became influential in the government. In Denmark, the Danish People's Party also gained influence – so much so that the party played a crucial political role in the Danish Parliament. Many right-wing populist parties also made significant headway in the European parliamentary elections held in 1999.

Since then, over a period of 20 years, these parties have increased their representation in the European Parliament, despite the general trend of parties losing seats due to EU expansion. The results from the 2014 election to the Parliament of the European Union pointed in this same direction and the prognosis close to the election to the Parliament of European Union now in May 2019 point to a further successful election results for the populist parties in many European countries. The electoral successes for the Right-Wing Populist Parties in several European countries (but not in all) really challenge Europe's democratic development for the coming years. In the European parliamentary elections 2014 Marine Le Pen's National Front in France became the largest party (25 percent) together with UKIP ("United Kingdom Independence Party") in Great Britain (28 percent) and the Danish People's Party in Denmark (27 percent). In Finland and Hungary the True Finns ("Perussuomalaiset", PS or "Sannfinländarna") (13 percent) and the party Jobbik (15 per cent) together with the government party Fidesz in Hungary become among the largest parties. These are some of the most exceptional/sensational results from the European parliamentary elections 2014. Against this background the likely results from the coming European parliamentary elections in May 2019 could become much more sensational compared with the former election 2014 in the sense that these parties are not only large in some or few European countries but in almost all countries in the European Union.

In Denmark, Pia Kjaersgaard's The Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) took over from the Progress Party 1995 after a split in the party and had a significant electoral breakthrough (13,3 per cent) in the 2001 election after receiving a smaller representation of 7,4 per cent in their first parliamentary election 1998. In 2012 Pia Kjaersgaard retreated as party leader after a period of 17 years and was replaced by a new younger leader Kristian Thulesen Dahl. In the general election 2015 he led the party to its best ever electoral results with 21.1 per cent of the votes. At the same time the party became the second largest party and the new Danish minority government consisting of only the liberal-conservative party Venstre is totally dependent by support from the Danish People's Party. Next parliamentary election in Denmark will take place 5th of June 2019.

In Norway Carl I. Hagen became the new party leader 1978 four year after the founder Anders Lange passed away. Under Hagen's leadership the party changed the name to the Progress Party. He led the party until 2006. Carl I. Hagen's Progress Party, under his successor Siv Jensen, continued to harvest political successes and became in the general election 2009 Norway's second largest party, with a voting percentage of 22.9 (and 41 seats) in the Norwegian Parliament. In the next general election 2013 the Progress Party decreased to 16,3 per cent (and 29 seats) but as a result of the election 2013 the party took for the first time place in a coalition government together with the Conservative party (Høyre). After the latest parliamentary election 2017 the Progress Party is still part of the Government. The party almost succeeded to keep the same percentage (15.2) as from the previous election 2013. Siv Jensen is still party leader and Minister of Finance in the Government.

In Finland the Rural Party played out its political role 1995 and in reality ceased to exist. The Rural Party was replaced by a similar party known as the True Finns the same year. From 1997 to 2017 the True Finns was led by the charismatic leader Timo Soini. In the general election 2011 the party obtained 19.1 per cent of the votes (and 39 seats). In the general election 2015 the True Finns obtained 17.7 per cent of the votes (a small decrease by 1.4 per cent) (and 38 seats). As a result of the election the party became part of the coalition government together with the Centre Party and the Conservative Party. The party was given four ministerial posts in the government. From 2017 Jussi Halla-aho is the True Finns new leader after Timo Soini. Timo Soini is the founder and longstanding leader of True Finns. He formed the new party Blue Future (Blå Framtid) after he had lost the leading position for the True Finns

2017 to the more radical right-wing populist leader Jussi Halla-aho. Timo Soini's new party Blue Future (with the four former ministers from his old party) decided to stay in the Government after a political crisis. At the same time the True Finns with their new leader went in opposition. But Timo Soini's new party Blue Future totally failed in the election 2019 and has no longer any representation in the Finnish parliament.

As this description indicates, populist parties have been part of the Nordic political scene for several decades and constitute a real challenge to the other parties. A better understanding of how these parties and their successors have developed and changed over time, in combination with factors that benefit or obstruct populism, also leads to new opportunities to address and deal with the challenge that populist parties can be said to represent

Mr. Fryklund argued that right-wing populism is the gateway or the key to being able to specifically understand and explain the successive growth and success of Sweden Democrats in recent years in the Swedish political system. The same goes for understand and explain the successes of these parties in the other Nordic countries. The political support for a racist and/or xenophobic party in the Swedish or in the Nordic political system is negligible and cannot even be measured in whole percentage rates. The development of right-wing populist parties including can only really be explained and understood on the basis of its right-wing populist appeal for and mobilization of a political dissatisfaction related to the issue of migration. The migration issue is about the criticism of the growing asylum- and refugee immigration to Sweden/the Nordic countries and its consequences for the welfare state and integration into Swedish/Nordic society. As far as Sweden is concerned, it is only recently that a greater politicization of the migration issue in both these respects has occurred and has favored SD. According to opinion polls on matters concerning migration there is during a long time a deep gap between voters and elected representatives, and it is precisely in this representation crisis that the Sweden Democrats and the other Nordic populist parties are mobilizing an increasingly broader electoral support. In this way, what I have called the democratic dilemma (a parliamentary party with popular electoral support but with undemocratic values) changes to a more overarching strategic dilemma about how the established parties should relate to the right-wing populist parties.

Q&A

One participant asked a clarifying question about Finland and the way that populism has changed over time within the country to be more racist and against migrants.

Mr. Fryklund answered that an important background for the True Finns, the populist party in Finland, was that they were incorporated into the political process more. Now, however, they feel that they are not seen any more by the party and that is why they ended up splitting.

Table Group discussions and Plenary Debate with speakers on populism and SD from evidence and practice

In the group discussions, participants were asked to reflect on two questions:

- 1) Which motives and perceptions behind populism should be addressed more intensively by SD?; and
- 2) How should this be done in practice?

Each group was given 2 blue moderation cards and 2 green moderation cards and were asked to answer the first question on the blue cards and the second question on the green cards. The results of the discussions can be read below.

Group 1

Questions	Answers
Which motives and perceptions behind populism should be addressed more intensively by SD?	Discourse about SD takes place among the elite and the technocratic elite. This might function as fuel for populist movements. It gives the impression that SD is a consensus of the elite.
How should this be done in practice?	Bring issues of SD into the political debate very concretely.
Discussion	<p>How do we become more concrete and not so elitist, as SD has been around for about 30 years?</p> <p>Maybe we have to start using some of the populist tactics too in SD.</p> <p>In Finland, they have been approaching some YouTubers to get them to talk about SD issues, and that is a nice try.</p> <p>SD was kept in a cross party consensus and now political parties are communicating it and only use it to gain a competitive advantage against other parties. So working SD into all political parties could be a pathway to better communicating with everyone.</p>

Group 2

Questions	Answers
Which motives and perceptions behind populism should be addressed more intensively by SD?	Perceptions and motives: conclusion that it is the undercurrents of fear, anxiety and loss that should be addressed. We cannot frame it away. If people see these things as problems, then they are problems. There are winners and losers. How do you take away these feelings of fear. Sometimes it is not always possible to do this.
How should this be done in practice?	Processes should be inclusive, be based on emotions/emotion management. Politicians should listen to and try to understand people. Take into account the perceptions and views of young people.
Discussion	What is the fear? Economic, not feeling heard, cultural and other issues.

Group 3

Questions	Answers
Which motives and perceptions behind populism should be addressed more intensively by SD?	Fear of change: There is also a stronger sense of urgency. Our systems do not deliver at the same speed. The low hanging fruit have been taken and if you start restricting access, then it creates fear.
How should this be done in practice?	Make SD change sexy and just! Make SD coherent and effective in order to make credible policies.
Discussion	Climate change has also been slow and political parties have been slow to act that populism can also be a reaction to this failure of governments having not accomplished much.

Group 4

Questions	Answers
Which motives and perceptions behind populism should be addressed more intensively by SD?	Fear, and inequality and social justice.
How should this be done in practice?	Communication/education and finding the correct channel and the correct form. Redistribution of wealth and taxation incentives.
Discussion	We use a lot of taxes to reduce inequalities, but not for the environment.

Group 5

Questions	Answers
Which motives and perceptions behind populism should be addressed more intensively by SD?	Unequal societies and distribution of environmental costs. Costly SD policy.
How should this be done in practice?	Redistributive policies to combat inequalities. Co-benefit communication regarding SD, talking about trade-offs and being clear and transparent.
Discussion	The future generations debate that is so common in SD, is never really brought up in populism or their rhetoric. Overall takeaways: We do not need a definition of populism, because it is so often pigeonholed as being bad and that does not help anyone, especially SD. We should maybe get rid of this term, as it disguises the true nature of the rhetoric; we should say what is wrong with them, i.e. xenophobia, anti-migrants, etc.

After the group discussions and feedback round, participants were able to hear an informal keynote speaker, who spoke during dinner.

Dinner Speech: Sustainable Development - Part of the problem or rather part of the solution when it comes to populism?

Ms. Heather Grabbe presented on populism, how it works and succeeds, as well as its shortcomings and the effect populism can have on climate change policy. She mainly focused on the reasons why populist parties are so successful. Those reasons are that they are primarily very skilled and adept at finding enemies and targets for their rhetoric as to why things are going poorly for their voter base. Mainly, populists target three different enemies: 1) The corrupt elites, who sit on top and only make policies that benefit themselves; 2) some threat from outside, such as the refugee crisis in Europe; and 3) some enemy within society.

Ms. Grabbe highlighted that while populists can succeed very well if they find enemies and new targets to attribute blame, this type of rhetoric, fear mongering, and heightened tensions is actually very

draining on the long-term to society and the people within it. Therefore, if populist parties cannot quickly find new scapegoats, then people tire of them.

In addition to this, Ms. Grabbe shared that populist parties also tend to lack any form of sustainable economic plans, which is their ultimate downfall in becoming stable political parties. This may also help explain why populist parties do not last once they make it into government any longer than 10 years, as they lack details and plans to execute their promises, which may reflect the fact that populists favor the 'simple solutions to complex problems' rhetoric.

Ms. Grabbe then discussed about the potential for populists to begin targeting climate change policies as being a very elitist issue. This is especially more poignant when one considers the degree to which populist parties deny facts and scientific knowledge regarding climate change.

However, Ms. Grabbe also contemplated a few ways in which populist parties could begin to care about climate change. Mainly, that the way climate change is framed may need to fit into and feature topics that populists tend to care about, such as immigration and asylum seekers. For example as climate change and climate change disasters worsen and affect more people, Europe may begin to see not only refugees fleeing war zones, but also climate change refugees. Climate change policy, therefore, could play a role in preemptively stemming asylum applications and migration to Europe by actively dealing with climate change in a proactive manner.

Opening Day 2

Mr. Jörg Mayer-Ries from the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety opened Day 2 of the Workshop and provided participants with a brief overview of Day 1.

One general lesson from Day 1 was that sustainable development is something that is not very concrete. Populism is also the same way, such as populist parties' lack of sustainable economic policies. The SD community needs to see how to effect policy on the long-term. There is a risk in the SD community to generalize populism (us vs. them), which is not helpful.

It became clear on Day 1 that one has to differentiate populism. It is not helpful to label something as populism when it actually represents some underlying factor(s), such as xenophobia, islamophobia, nationalism, etc. From the SD perspective, SD does something very future oriented, and it is very complex. Populism is the opposite, it is short-term or very centered in the past ("the glorious past"). The SD people need to make the SDGs and SD concrete, so on the practical level and on the local level where changes can be seen and felt. Another option would be not to adapt to this and keep with making research and learning. However, science should not try to oversimplify things.

Counter strategies: Truth, vision, game changing instruments/transformational policy, and taking up emotional and narrative ideas. Environmental policy is very attractive for this kind of simple solutions. Heather Grabbe (dinner speaker) pointed out that environmental policy might be the next attack point of populists, as they are constantly looking for new enemies and scapegoats. Climate should be more about intergenerational justice, rather than about north-south justice, because one does not reach populists with that, but focusing on the future and the future of one's children is common between everyone. Mr. Mayer-Ries concluded that the SD community should engage with the populism topic more, and, in addition, combine the topics of populism and environmental policy.

Session 3: Reactions of Sustainability Policy to Rising Populism

Session 3 included one keynote presentation by two representatives of Adelphi, in which they discussed the reactions of sustainability policy to rising populism. After the presentation, there was a question and answer session, which was then followed by interactive table discussions. The keynote presentation can be found on the ESDN website.

Populism and Sustainable Development Policy in Europe

Ms. Stella Schaller began her keynote presentation, which was based off an Adelphi study, “Convenient Truths: Mapping climate agendas of right-wing populist parties in Europe”, by highlighting the successes of populist parties in national elections in Europe, where they are represented in 23 out of 28 national parliaments in EU countries. Moreover, populists form parts of the government in eight EU countries, and hold an absolute majority in two of them. She also highlighted that with the upcoming European Parliament elections, it is forecasted that right-wing populist parties will gain 22-25% of the seats and may then be represented in the new European Commission.

When it comes to climate change and climate change science, there are varying degrees to which populist parties subscribe to the common understanding of anthropogenic climate change: 1) Denialist and skeptical; 2) Disengaged and cautious; and 3) Affirmative. Seven European countries have populist parties that are climate change deniers and skeptics, eleven are disengaged and cautious, and only three populist parties from three countries are affirmative.

Ms. Schaller pointed out that right-wing populist parties use four main arguments against climate change policy: 1) economically unfavorable; 2) socially unfair; 3) environmentally harmful; and 4) politically ineffective and illegitimate.

Mr. Alexander Carius then took over from his colleague and began discussing the way in which right-wing populist parties dismantle climate change policy. He shared that in the entire discourse in dealing with right wing populism is that they focus on questioning science and fake news. There is no other such consensus in science as there is about human induced climate change. Populists also frame climate change as an elitist issue.

Part of the climate change debate is the question of accountability and credibility: if we know what we have to do, then why are we not being more aggressive and pointed in doing it? What would happen if we do not meet the goals?

Mr. Carius then raised some questions regarding climate change policy and where it can gain momentum: Where is the discourse becoming radicalized? If we are serious about ecological transformation, then there has to be a drastic change (Fridays for future). Doing away with dirty subsidies, coal, etc. This should come from the center of our democratic societies.

Regarding coalitions, the center will notice marginal groups, and influencing this will influence the way in which coalitions form, such as the refugee crisis saw center parties move more to the right. How can we make this so for environmental policy and shift them to the left/force them to address climate change policy?

Mr. Carius shared that it would help to look at the constituencies of attitudes towards liberal democracy and how people view it, then you can find out what the people care about and how they are susceptible to right wing populist parties and their rhetoric.

It is often the case that climate policy runs on a fear based narrative, this five minutes before midnight type scenarios. The response of some countries is to declare emergencies, but that raises the question of if this is appealing for society. What is missing are the scaled down narratives that tend away from this gloom and doom scenario of the world ending if nothing is done to halt climate change. We need to develop narratives for how the world will look like if we succeed in meeting climate goals (Paris Agreement, 2030 Agenda/SDGs). How will it look like for the miner’s children or those in the automotive sector? How will lives play out over the course of a generation and a half?

Q&A

One participant asked the presenters if climate policy is an easy victim for populists. The presenters answered that it is, indeed, easy for populists to attack climate policy. It also does not help that the people who advocate for climate policy act as if they have all the answers to solving climate change.

One question focused on the difference between the expert discourse and party policy discourse and what it is exactly that experts can do to distinguish this discourse. The presenters answered that right-wing populists say climate change science is elite. This is true, science and atmospheric science is elite, because it is very complex. The question really is, are politics elite? Politics needs to move beyond scientific results, but take into account society and societal behavior.

Interactive Table Discussions

In these interactive table discussions, participants were asked to answer two questions:

- 1) How would current SD policy need to change in the context of rising populism?; and
- 2) How can this be accomplished in practice and by whom?

The results were recorded on flipcharts and can be seen below.

Table 1

What needs to change in SD policy?	How can this be accomplished in practice and by whom?
Clear scenarios of the future on the collective and individual levels	-
Honesty, transparency and address conflicting goals	-
Balance preservation and modernization	-

Table 2

What needs to change in SD policy?	How can this be accomplished in practice and by whom?
A series of story lines on “The Good Life” in 2050	Developing them with researchers, NGOs and marketing organizations, churches
Broaden the constituency beyond the usual crowd	Partnering with the unconventional parties (<i>Landfrauen</i> , Hunting clubs, etc.)
Highlight the social-economic aspects of SD, for example in rural areas	Develop new redistribution scenarios

Table 3

What needs to change in SD policy?	How can this be accomplished in practice and by whom?
Answer the following challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership by “the people” • Changing winners-losers/redistribute • Different approach to policy-making process/public administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New SDG civil participation ○ New perspectives/designs/options for political choices ○ Steer implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare policymakers/public administration for their new role • Empower the young people • Other leaders than old white males with ties to industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Start with concrete actions ○ Support new perspectives/funds ○ Leadership of sustainable policy-making #how?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social dimension first • Politicize the debate! 	Empathy/communication

Table 4

What needs to change in SD policy?	How can this be accomplished in practice and by whom?
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dialogue, ○ Positive approach, ○ Inspiring, focusing on opportunities
Burden sharing in a socially just way	Incentives that bring alternatives
Reaching out to people who have been left behind and acting	Define and realize actions that show concrete outcomes for citizens

Table 5

What needs to change in SD policy?	How can this be accomplished in practice and by whom?
Addressing also the rural, materialistic, traditional, etc. with narratives, communication	Subsidize rural areas and take subsidies away from e-mobility
e-mobility rural vs. urban	-
Getting prices right	Address the issue of winners and losers Strategy on how to address or deal with losers Impact assessments

Workshop Closure

Mr. Jörg Mayer-Ries thanked all participants and speakers on behalf of the Germany Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and commented that the theme of this Workshop is particularly relevant for Europe.

Ms. Elisabeth Freytag-Rigler also thanked participants and speakers for making the Workshop a very wonderful learning experience on behalf of the ESDN. She then challenged everyone present to take what they learned at the Workshop and go back to their countries and talk to their ministers, their cabinets and colleagues about the 25% of the European population that is forecasted to vote for populist parties in the European Parliamentary elections, and try to find ways to bridge the gap between populist rhetoric and climate change and find some middle ground.

