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## Emancipatory rural politics: confronting authoritarian populism

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### Abstract

A new political moment is underway. Although there are significant differences in how this is constituted in different places, one manifestation of the new moment is the rise of distinct forms of authoritarian populism. In this opening paper of the *JPS* Forum series on 'Authoritarian Populism and the Rural World', we explore the relationship between these new forms of politics and rural areas around the world. We ask how rural transformations have contributed to deepening regressive national politics, and how rural areas shape and are shaped by these politics. We propose a global agenda for research, debate and action, which we call the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI, [www.iss.nl/erpi](http://www.iss.nl/erpi)). This centres on understanding the contemporary conjuncture, working to confront authoritarian populism through the analysis of and support for alternatives.

### Introduction

If a new political moment can be said to be underway, what are its features? At a time of increasing inequality between rich and poor, rural and urban, labour and capital, the following seem particularly relevant: the rise of protectionist politics and the embrace of nationalism over regional or global integration, whether in trade blocs or international agreements; highly contested national elections, resonant with broad-brush appeals to 'the people', in which candidates are rewarded for 'strong man' talk that pits insiders against outsiders of different colours, religions and origins; growing concern over the 'mobile poor', including refugees and migrants whose presence seems to threaten a shrinking resource base; appeals for security at the expense of civil liberties; a concerted push to increase extractive capitalism at all costs; and, finally, a radical undermining of the state's ability to support the full range of citizens, while utilising state powers to increase surplus for a minority.

These elements are not evident everywhere, nor are they necessarily evident in their entirety anywhere. At the same time, many are actively working to counter these elements and nowhere is any single political approach absolute. What we see, however, is the rise of politicians, movements and spaces where these political-economic dynamics are playing





















































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