

Modi, Trump, Twitter, and the Dark Horizons of Globalizing Populism



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Bio : Ralph Schroeder is Professor in Social Science of the Internet at the Oxford Internet Institute and director of its MSc programme in Social Science of the Internet. Before coming to Oxford University, he was Professor in the School of Technology Management and Economics at Chalmers University in Gothenburg (Sweden). His publications include 'Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology and Globalization' (UCL Press, 2018, [online http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/browse-books/social-theory-after-the-internet](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/ucl-press/browse-books/social-theory-after-the-internet)), 'Knowledge Machines: Digital Transformations of the Sciences and Humanities' (MIT Press, 2015, co-authored with Eric T. Meyer), 'Being There Together: Social Interaction in Virtual Environments' (Oxford University Press, 2010) and 'Rethinking Science, Technology and Social Change' (Stanford University Press, 2007). His current research interests include digital media and right-wing populism, and the social implications of big data.

Abstract: This talk will present an overview of ongoing research about populist communication. Modi and Trump were both propelled to victory in their respective elections by Twitter, by circumventing their own parties and traditional media. Their tweets have continued, but now evince quite different styles. Their use of social media has provoked major debates about misinformation ('fake news'), polarization, and a crisis of democracy. Yet social media can also be a source of social listening, of gauging what populist supporters want. Furthermore, it is important not to exaggerate the role of social media; the roots of populist support can be found in deeper structural transformations that are not only economic and cultural but also political. This point will be illustrated by extending the scope to Sweden and China. Digital media companies currently face widespread criticism for their role in politics, but social media also create lively public spheres. In the talk, I will argue that it is necessary to distinguish between news and online public debate, but also that these need to be put into the context of how politics is being reconfigured beyond left and right by ultranationalists

Date: 24 Jan 2019, Thursday

Time: 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

Venue: A 106, R & D Block

