

Well Grubbed Old Mole

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Artist Statement

This is an ongoing discussion with two Marxists, rumored at the time to be working in the basement. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, back in 1985 when I was an undergraduate, wrote an influential book - 'Hegemony and Socialist Strategy, Towards a Radical Democratic Politics' - suggesting populism could appeal to people's 'common sense'. The key was the articulation of new 'imagination' which helped shape a new 'political identity' based on people's 'true' shared interests. This new imagination though involved an antagonism. In their case based on class interests.

Brexit was not the populism I'd hoped for and they'd suggested. Led from the right 'the story', the new imagination, appealed to a particular sense of Englishness which I did not share. Worst still the antagonism I felt was aimed at people like me or people fleeing troubled lands. This wasn't how it should be, believing a 'cry for help' - people struggling in a rapidly changing world - was cleverly stolen by a small elite who had their own interests to promote.

Whilst making my position clear this is a photographic journey of exploration: of my own changing identity over four years from the Brexit referendum, and an empathetic exploration into England's hopes and dreams at the end of 2020. Limited by Covid lockdown and practicalities this only hints at answers. Expanded to also include people of Donegal it questions whether there is such a thing as a shared 'common sense' based on 'true' interests and if so is this the basis for an alternative political project, particularly if it must include an antagonism.