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**The appeal of populist ideas, strategies and styles:
A theoretical model and research design for analyzing
populist political communication**

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Abstract

This working paper approaches the study of populism from an explicit political communication perspective and thereby adds a new and original dimension to the existing literature. It first reviews the existing approaches to populism and then combines them within an integrative framework for populism research. This framework understands populism as ideology, strategy, or style and arranges them in a way that permits the empirical analysis of populism in political communication, media and the attitudes of the people. The framework serves as a guide for developing straightforward instruments to identify and quantitatively measure populism in the self-presentation of actors, in news media and other forms of communication, as well as in public opinion. By virtue of the broadness of the framework, it is applicable to longitudinal and cross-cultural analyses of populism, as well as the investigation of the flow of populist ideology among political actors, the media, and the public. It takes a non-normative and primarily analytical perspective. The working paper has two major aims. First, it is intended to provide a common ground for populism research within Research Module II of the NCCR Democracy at the University of Zurich. Second, it is intended to distribute our framework for investigating the relationship between populism and political communication to other scholars and thereby facilitate cumulative research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Nearly 50 years ago, Ionescu and Gellner (1969) perceived populism as a “spectre haunting the world” (p. 1), implying that it was something obscure, unnatural, and frightening. In line with this negatively connoted analogy, populism, at least in Western Europe, was widely understood as a pathological form of democracy similar to right-wing radicalism (Betz, 1994). Ten years ago, there was a remarkable shift in perception when Mudde (2004) argued that populism was nothing anomalous but had become “mainstream in the politics of Western democracies” (p. 542). Consequently, he coined the notion of a “populist Zeitgeist” (p. 542). This zeitgeist was amply illustrated in the European Parliamentary Election of 2014, when the French National Front, the United Kingdom Independence Party, and the Danish People’s Party accumulated the largest share of voters in their respective countries (European Parliament, 2014). Regardless of whether we prefer to speak of populism as disturbing specter or popular zeitgeist, it retains its intangible nature and is difficult to grasp by definitional means.

It is not an easy endeavor to study the phenomenon of populism, and it is particularly challenging to analyze it empirically. A possible reason for this is the difficulty of defining it - as several authors assert (e.g., Canovan, 1999; Priester, 2011; Taggart, 2000). There is a multitude of different understandings and definitions of populism. It is therefore no surprise that research on populism employs different research paradigms, rooted in different theories, to measure populism in politics, media and the attitudes of the people.

In this paper, we first review the different approaches to populism and then combine them within an integrative framework for populism research. This framework does not reject the different notions of populism as ideology, strategy, or style (to mention only the most influential approaches) but arrange them in a way that permits the empirical analysis of populism in political communication, media and the attitudes of the people. The framework serves as a guide for developing straightforward instruments to identify and quantitatively measure populism in the self-presentation of actors, in news media and other forms of communication, as well as in public opinion. By virtue of the broadness of the framework, it is applicable to longitudinal and cross-cultural analyses of populism, as well as the investigation of the flow of populist ideology among political actors, the media, and the public. It is also worth noting that it is a non-normative framework that approaches the study of populism from a primarily analytical perspective.

This working paper has two major aims. First, it is intended to provide a common ground for populism research within Research Module II of the NCCR Democracy at the University of Zurich. The paper includes the basic concepts and definitions that resulted from collaborative work within this research module uniting scholars from political and communication science. Second, the

working paper is intended to distribute our framework for investigating the relationship between populism and political communication to other scholars and thereby facilitate cumulative research. We therefore hope that his working paper will be widely cited by those who are inspired by it.

The intention is not to publish this working paper as a fixed and finished text. Instead, it will retain its status as a 'living' working paper that is freely available to be widely shared (<http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch>). The authors reserve the right to revise and update this working paper throughout the duration of the research project; newer versions will be clearly marked on the title page.

Chapter 2: Political Populism

Definitional ambiguity

Populism is a highly contested concept and very difficult to define (Priester, 2011). It has been attributed with a “constitutional ambiguity” (Taguieff, 1997, p. 11) resulting in a “notoriously vague term” (Canovan, 1999, p. 3), which entails a certain “conceptual slipperiness” (Taggart, 2000, p. 1). Accordingly, most definitions of populism suffer from “inherent incompleteness” (Taggart, 2004, p. 275). One of the reasons for this definitional ambiguity is the fact that populism manifests itself differently depending on contextual conditions (Priester, 2007).

Modern age populism can be traced back to the Farmer’s Alliance in the US, which began as an economic movement in the 1870s and sought to improve farmers’ precarious working conditions in the aftermath of the American Civil War. After having failed to achieve its economic goals, the alliance politically institutionalized and transformed into the People’s Party in 1891, which, by promoting radical agrarianism and anti-elitism, presumably qualified as the first populist party of modern times (Hicks, 1931). Yet, populism was far from being restricted to the agrarianist context: From the beginning of the 20th century, Fascist, National Socialist, and Communist leaders worldwide employed populist ideas and enriched them with their respective ideologies as they pleased. The first critical scientific examination of populism did not take place until after World War II. It was triggered by the practice of McCarthyism in the US and initiated by Lipset (1960) and Shils (1956). Both authors argued that populism had “many faces” (Houwen, 2011, p. 18). They retrospectively attributed populism to such different political entities as the Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s, Argentine President Juan Peron in the 1940s, the Nazi dictatorship, and Bolshevism.

In the second half of the 20th century, various political groups wielded populism as a discursive weapon or polemical term, be it the political right attacking the political left or vice versa. For example, on the one hand, the “neocons” in the US accused the New Social Movements of being populist. On the other hand, the same allegation was raised from representatives of the New Political Economy in the UK against the politics of British Prime Minister Thatcher.

In recent years, there has been a notable revival of right-wing populism in Western Europe (Mudde, 2007) and left-wing populism in Latin America (Hawkins, 2009, 2010). With the emergence of the Tea Party and the Occupy movement, the public debate surrounding populism flared up again in the US (Barstow, 2010; Lowndes & Warren, 2011).

It is important to note that the following discussion of populism – including the literature we review and the conceptual foundations we provide – is confined to the contemporary political and media realities of Europe and North America. This limitation in conceptual scope is indispensable

to keep the discussion of this multifaceted term sufficiently concrete and precise (see also Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008b; Mazzoleni, 2003; Mény & Surel, 2002; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). Yet, even within these boundaries, populism can take on many forms. To account for the manifold manifestations of the concept we will – following other authors – tentatively define populism as “a distinct set of political ideas” (Hawkins, 2010, p. 5). These ideas are seen as interrelating with each other in varying ways. Hence, it seems appropriate to comprehend populism first and foremost as a relational concept (Priester, 2012; Rooduijn, 2013). To describe the constituent elements and their respective relations, we will draw on a basic heuristic model that we introduce in the following. Thereby, we are aiming at a definition of populism as a "thin" ideology.

Populism as relational concept.

The heuristic model will serve as an initial understanding of populism. It is based on the conceptual distinction between *substantial* and *relational* concepts (Aristotle, *Categories*, *Physics*; Cassirer, 1910). While a substantial concept has a meaning of its own, the kernel of a thing, which is completely independent from other concepts, the semantics of a relational concept are fundamentally determined by the relations between the concepts involved. The relational network of populism can be briefly described as follows: *Sovereignty* of the people is located at the center of the network, as it is understood as the major motive of all claims and actions, as the connecting principle or the subject of negotiations of all other elements involved in the network. Accordingly, the remaining elements, the *people*, the *elite*, the *populist* and *the others*, are arranged in a loose triangle around *sovereignty*, with each having a unique position toward this center and special relations with one another. In brief, the populist ideology argues that the people have the right to sovereignty, the elite or the others (threaten to) deprive the people of this right, and the populist (protects or) restores the sovereignty of the people (Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 408). Hence, a natural antagonism between the people and the elite or others is established (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008a, p. 3; Mudde, 2004, p. 543), whereas the populist maintains a positive or close relation to the people and a negative or distant relation to the elite or others (Barr, 2009; Weyland, 2001). In the following paragraphs, the different elements of the relational network will be described in greater detail.

Populism as a thin ideology

Before we introduce the model in detail, it is important to emphasize that we define populism as a thin ideology (e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). Compared to thick or full ideologies, thin ideologies refer to a rather narrow set of ideas about the

world (Mudde, 2004) – in the case of populism, these ideas concern the structures of power in society (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008). The advantage of understanding populism as a thin ideology is the possibility to determine what makes different types of populist movements populist, compared to what makes them left- or right-wing. This conceptualization also corresponds with the minimal definition approach postulated by Rovira Kaltwasser (2012): Populism as a thin ideology is the common denominator shared by all manifestations of populism. Populism can be combined with other ideologies (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004; Kaltwasser, 2012), such as socialism or nativism, to provide a more complete picture of the world. While populism as a thin ideology refers to the relationship among the people, the elite and the populist actor – as described by our heuristic model – populism as a thick ideology specifies who is included in or excluded from those groups. Left-wing populism defines the people as a class and sees them opposed to an economic elite; right-wing populism, by contrast, defines the people as an ethnos and sees them opposed to a political and cultural elite.

Sovereignty of the people

Undoubtedly, sovereignty plays a pivotal role in any conceivable concept of democracy. Yet, within the populist ideology, this concept is the core principle. Particularly in opposition to representative forms of democracy, the *rule of the people* amounts to the central motive within the populist argument. Following Abts and Rummens (2007), it is this demand for unrestricted power of the people that distinguishes the populist idea of democracy from constitutional and liberal logics of democracy. Whereas according to the two latter logics, the locus of power should either remain an “empty place” (constitutional democracy) or be “replaced by a totally anonymous rule of law” (liberal democracy) (Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 406), according to the populist logic, the people operate the locus of power. In effect, the people are thought to have an indisputable *right* to constitute power; consequently, all politics should “be based on the immediate expression of the general will of the people” (Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 408). Following on the populist argument, the elites are accused of having deprived the people of this right, making sovereignty the central subject matter of all subsequent dispute. The populist considers him/herself to be the only one able to restore the sovereignty of the people by replacing the elite and all other representative and intermediary institutional arrangements of which it is considered a part (Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 408). It is thus the direct form of democracy that the populist most sympathizes with because here popular sovereignty may be exerted in the most unreserved way. To gain a more exhaustive understanding of the relations among these actors and their special bearings on popular sovereignty, the following paragraphs will specifically address each actor in turn.

The people

As the people are ascribed the right to sovereignty, in the various definitions of populism that can be found in the literature, this actor is generally considered the most central to the concept (e.g., Taggart, 2000, p. 91). As Jagers and Walgrave (2007) have stressed, “populism always refers to the people and justifies its actions by appealing to and identifying with the people” (p. 322). An additional essential aspect of populism is that the people must have the right of sovereignty (Stanley, 2008, p. 102; Panizza, 2005, p. 4; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 6), which is located at the center of our proposed network. This is why populism appeals to the people as the democratic sovereign (Canovan, 1999, p. 4).

In general, the people are always characterized as a homogeneous (March, 2012, p. 8; Stanley, 2008, p. 102; Rensmann, 2006, p. 64; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 4; Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 323) or monolithic group (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 322; Taggart, 2000, p. 92), forming a social unity or community (Baumann, 2001, p. 12; Taggart, 2000, p. 92; Jansen, 2011, p. 84). The people are equipped with certain virtues (Taggart, 2000, p. 93; Jansen, 2011, p. 84; Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008, p. 6; Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 323) and described as inherently good (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 6) and paramount (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 6; Kriesi, 2013, p. 4). Taggart (2000) argues that the people act according to “common sense” (p. 95) and can be regarded as a “silent majority” (p. 93). This notion is what empowers “the people” to make their voice heard over the “clamouring minority” (p. 93).

However, according to Mudde (2004), the people in the populist sense are “neither real nor all-inclusive, but are in fact a mythical and constructed subset of the whole population” (p. 546). This artificial comprehension of the people is derived from the concept of the *heartland*, first introduced by Taggart (1996). He describes the heartland as a territory of the imagination that “is different from ideal societies or utopias because it sees populists casting their imaginative glances backwards in an attempt to construct what has been lost by the present” (Taggart 2000, p. 95). By doing so, populists attempt to evoke the image of a virtual ‘location’ being occupied by the people and representing “the core of the community and excludes the marginal or the extreme” (p. 96). As the heartland can be different for every special case of populism, it can serve as a tool to determine how each populist connects to the people and the basis for the populist’s commitment to the people. Priester (2012) uses “Middle America” or “La France Profonde” as examples of the heartland. Popular icons of the heartland are the Boston Tea Party in the US, Guy Fawkes in the UK, and Wilhelm Tell in Switzerland. The heartland addressed by populists such as Berlusconi or Haider is populated by the hard-working, conservative, law-abiding citizen, who, in silence but with growing anger, sees his world being ‘perverted’ by progressives, criminals and aliens (Mudde, 2004, p. 557).

Given these many possible interpretations of the people or the heartland, it seems impossible to find a sole definition of the term. Rather, 'the people' can mean different things to different populists in different circumstances. Canovan (1999) and Kriesi (2013), following Mény and Surel (2000), identified three different conceptions of 'the people' in the populist discourse: The first is a political one that describes "the people as *sovereign*" (Kriesi 2013, p. 3) or as the "*united people*" as Canovan (1999, p. 5) has labeled it. The "distinguishing feature of the people as a *sovereign* is the people as the *demos*" (Kriesi, 2013, p. 3), which comprises all the people in the nation and speaks against fragmentation. The second sense of the people is a cultural one, which understands the people "as a *nation*" (Kriesi, 2013, p. 3) or as "*our people*" (Canovan, 1999, p. 5) and distinguishes in an ethnic sense between those who do and do not belong to the people. The people in this conception comprise "the *ethnos*" (Kriesi, 2013, p. 3), and populism focuses on the exclusion of all those who do not belong to the national community (e.g., immigrants, foreigners or other minorities). The third conception – the economic one – describes the people "as a *class*" and distinguishes between the "'big shots' [...]" and the "'little guys'" (Kriesi 2013, p. 4) or, in Canovan's words, between the "*ordinary people*" (1999, p. 5) and the privileged, highly educated, cosmopolitan elite, where the former are oppressed and exploited by the latter, who have "fill[ed] their pockets with undeserved bonuses" (Kriesi, 2013, p. 4).

The elite

Within the relational network, the people find themselves opposed to what is most often summarized in the literature under the label of "the elite" (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). This antagonistic relationship between these two groups is essential for each type of populism (e.g., Hawkins, 2009, p. 1042; Decker, 2006, p. 12; Mény & Surel, 2002, p. 12); some authors even regard this as "the core element of populism" (e.g., Panizza, 2004, p. 4; Stanley, 2008, p.102). The antagonism is so strong and indissoluble that it is often described as Manichean (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). The people and the elite are seen as coming from two worlds, one good and of light, the other evil and of darkness, where the latter attempts to invade the peace of the former. This Manichean outlook is also displayed within the triangle of populism proposed here, where the position within the network nominates the elite as "the enemies of the people" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5). Depending on the context and opportunity structure, different types of "elite" can be addressed, which makes them initially appear as a rather diffuse and *non-homogeneous* group (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5). Conceivable targets are the political (the government or the political establishment), economic (bankers, managers), cultural (the media), intellectual (scholars, writers) or legal elites (courts, administration) (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 324). To all of them, and without exception, only negatively connoted attributes are assigned: Among many others, the

elite is portrayed as “corrupt” and “exploitative” (e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 4), as “anti-popular” and “immoral” (e. g. Jansen, 2011, p. 84), as “evil” and “conspiring” (e.g., Hawkins, 2009, p. 1042), as “selfish” and “arrogant” (Rooduijn, 2013, p. 6) or – among many more – as “unaccountable” and “incompetent” (Mény & Surel, 2002, p. 9). In fact their entire identity simply emerges in dissociation from the people, from being the people’s eternal “nemesis” (Mudde, 2004, p. 544). The elite is thus not virtuous, not sensible and least of all good, and in that very sense its identity can be seen just as *homogeneous* as the identity of the people (Mudde 2004, p. 543; March, 2012, p. 84; Stanley, 2008, p. 102).

Set as the antagonist of the people, the elite are accused of betraying the people, of having an unjustified control over their rights, well-being and progress (Jansen, 2011, p. 84). They are indicted for being “unable to deliver on the promises they have given” (Mény & Surel, 2002, p. 9) and blamed for the current undesirable situation the people have to bear (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 4). Moreover, they only understand and represent themselves and have no conception of the people’s interests (March, 2012, p. 9). By abusing the power originally given to them by the people, the corrupt elites have occupied, distorted and exploited democracy, sometimes to the extent of its total degeneration (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 4; Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 313). The people, the actual democratic sovereign, have lost control over these evil machinations (Rensmann, 2006, p.64). Accordingly, the relationship between the people and the elites can be defined as a relationship of dependence. The people find themselves in a helpless situation, facing an elite (self-selected or elected) that reigns for their own merit at the expense of the people’s sovereignty.

The populist actor

The third actor in the relational network is the populist, who criticizes the elite for hampering the centrality of the people (Rooduijn, 2013, p. 102) and seeks to give the people back their voice and power (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 4; Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 323, Rensmann, 2006, p. 64). In the literature, the populist actor is described as a movement (e.g., Kriesi, 2013), a party (e.g., Mudde 2004), and often, as a single person: the charismatic leader. Some scholars regard the existence of a charismatic leader as inherent to populism (e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Canovan, 1999; Decker, 2006; Hartleb, 2014; Kriesi, 2013; Weyland, 2000). Others (e.g., Hartleb, 2014; March, 2012; Mudde 2004; Panizza, 2005) regard such leaders as features that often occur with populism but are not a necessary part of it. Charismatic or “personalistic” (Barr, 2009, p. 40; Weyland, 2001, p. 5) leaders are eloquent spokespersons, often outsiders to the political establishment (Kriesi, 2013, p. 7). They embody the people’s will (Barr ,2009, p. 40) and take the role of the people’s advocate (Hartleb, 2014, p. 52). According to Canovan (1999), charismatic

leaders spread a “populist mood” (p. 6), an “extra emotional ingredient” (p. 6) that distinguishes populist politics from routine politics, which it transforms into a campaign to save the country.

According to Canovan (1999), populists reject intransparency and complexity, such as backroom deals, complicated procedures, secret treaties, coalition-building, or technicalities that only experts can understand (p. 6). Conversely, they advocate an unmediated, transparent, and simple link between the people and their government and thus favor direct democracy, directly elected leaders and a reduction of powers of the parliament and other intermediary bodies (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5f; March, 2012, p.11). Populists reject constitutionalism and representation (March, 2012, p.11), as well as other institutions or procedures “which impede the direct and full expression of the people’s voice” (Mény & Surel, 2002, p. 9). They also reject the established political parties, as these “corrupt the link between leaders and supporters, create artificial divisions within the homogeneous people and put their own interests above those of the people” (Mudde, 2004, p. 546). In contrast, populists are one with the people and instinctively know what the people want (Albertazzi & McDonnell 2008, p. 6); they incarnate the demands of the people (Kriesi, 2013, p.7) and are guided by common sense (March, 2012, p.8). The populists regard themselves as the voice of the people and emphasize the idea of popular sovereignty (Meny & Surel, 2002, Rooduijn, 2013).

The dangerous others

In addition to the elite, the “dangerous others” (Rooduijn, 2013, p. 7) are also excluded from the “good” people. Whereas some authors understand the elite as the danger from ‘above’ (*vertical dimension*), the ‘dangerous others’ are perceived as a threat from ‘within’ the people (*horizontal dimension*) (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 324). Other authors speak of a “twofold vertical structure” (e.g., Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 418) in which the elite are again positioned above the people, whereas the others – considered the bottom of society – are placed ‘below’ the people. There are various population segments that can provide a target for populist appeals to resentment: immigrants, people of another race, criminals, profiteers, perverts, religious and other minorities are particularly reproached for threatening the purity of the people (Betz & Johnson, 2004, p. 313; Rooduijn, 2013, p. 7; Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 418). By excluding these parts of society as its bad segment, populists manage to distinguish the people’s identity as inherently good (Abts & Rummens, 2007, p. 418). Although excluded from the people, the others are also not part of the elite; yet, they are seen as unjustly favored by the elite or sometimes even as their partner in a conspiracy against the people. Accordingly, “[t]hey are defined as being a threat to and a burden on society” (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 324).

The literature on populism provides a lengthy discussion of how to integrate these 'others' in a definition of populism. Few authors treat them as a core of the definition (e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008). However, a broader consensus appears to be reached among, for instance, Mudde (2004), Canovan (1981), Taggart (2000) and Rooduijn (2013), who consider the others not to be an "intrinsic property of populism as such" (Rooduijn, 2013, p. 7). Rather, their exclusion is linked to forms of radical right-wing populism and thus only part of one of many shades that the populist chameleon can take (cf. Taggart, 2000, p. 4).

The populist dilemma

Although the populists claim to belong to the people, they have unique qualities and visions that predestine them to save the people (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5). Mudde (2004, p. 548) describes the people as reactive; they do not take the initiative, but have to be mobilized. The populist actors thus have to make a sacrifice and enter "the dirty arcane world of politics" (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5). When they are successful in the political arena and gain votes in elections, populists are presented with the institutional dilemma by which "they are forced to become that, which they dislike" (Taggart, 2000, p. 100). Mudde (2004, p. 560) notes that some populist leaders (e.g., Berlusconi, Fortuyn, Haider) have never been true outsiders; they were well connected to the elite before their political success and thus faced this dilemma from the beginning of their political careers. Possibilities to cope with such ambiguity are to remain one of the people in terms of vocabulary, attire, declared pastimes, etc. (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, p. 5), or to emphasize the role of a charismatic or authoritarian leader (Taggart, 2000, p. 100).

Differentiation from similar concepts

As shown above, populism is a fuzzy concept with different dimensions, characteristics and ideological leanings. It is possible to narrow down key components, but the question remains of how to differentiate it from other political forces with radical left- and right-wing ideologies. For example, a fascist party might also employ some of the communication strategies and styles discussed above, such as exclusion of the "other" and an emphasis on the merits of the "people". This begs the question of whether these differentiations are a matter of substance or just of degree. Several scholars have addressed this issue, such as Kohlstruck (2008), Priester (2010) and Mudde (2007). Kohlstruck (2008) argues, building upon Mudde, that the crucial distinction is between anti-system and anti-establishment parties (the former being radical, the latter being populist). This applies to both left- and right-wing variants of radicalism.

Priester (2010, p. 34) offers the criticism that this is a mere analytical distinction, as radical parties usually also use anti-establishment rhetoric. For her, the key difference is located on an

ideological level: radicals employ a coherent and holistic ideology, while populist ideology is more diffuse (also see “thin” and “thick” ideology). Together, the two criteria form an initial understanding of how to differentiate radical movements from populism:

First, populists are anti-establishment, but they are not anti-system. They stand by the democratic system and in fact often present themselves as the “true democrats”, as they fight for the democratic rights and sovereignty of “the people”. This is the very core element of “thin” ideology.

Second, it is typical of radical anti-system movements (both left and right) to employ a coherent and holistic ideological perspective that explicitly refuses actually existing democracy. This ideology contains elements that are also used to enrich “thin” populist ideology to an extent that the populist ideology becomes “thick”, but it must not be as elaborate as a “proper” radical ideology. We deliberately use the term “radical” instead of the potentially more intuitive term “extremist”, as the original meaning of “radical” contains this defining element of anti-systemic ideology (“radical” is derived from the Latin word “radicus”, which means roots; a “radical” seeks to find solutions at the “root of the problem”, which in politics usually is the system level). With these differentiations clarified, we advance a tentative understanding the concept under study.

Working definition of populism

We define populism as a thin ideology, which considers – in a Manichean outlook – society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, the positively connoted “pure people” versus the negatively connoted “corrupt elite”, and it postulates unrestricted sovereignty of the people. This basic definition developed from the existing literature (see, e.g., Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, Mudde, 2004) will be developed further and linked to our political communication-guided research interests in the further course of this paper. Before we can specify our own understanding (see chapter 6), several intermediary steps are needed that establish the foundation for our argumentation. A first key step is to clarify our normative assessment of populism. Next, we thus explicate the relationship between populism and democracy.

Populism and democracy

Following Caramani (forthcoming), we recognize that populism entails a specific vision of democracy and representation that places particular emphasis on the “sovereignty of the people”. The best way of illustrating the conceptual core of “populist democracy” is by distinguishing it from other established concepts of democracy. For Dahl (1956), “populist democracy” differs from liberal “Madisonian democracy” mainly in its disregard for constitutionalist elements such as the rule of law, the division of power, or the respect for the rights of minorities. These constitutional

elements are rejected because in the eyes of populists, they confine the people's sovereignty. Similarly other authors have compared populism and liberalism (Riker, 1982), popular and constitutional democracies (Mény & Surel, 2002), delegative democracy and polyarchy (O'Donnell, 1994), democracy and populism (Urbinati, 1998), and populist and party democracy (Mair, 2002).

The literature on populism defines the populist vision of democracy by distinguishing it from other models (Canovan, 1999, Mudde, 2007, Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008, Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). Kriesi (2014) and Pappas (2014) summarize the core of the populist vision in the rejection of three basic premises of liberal theories of democracy,

First, populist democracy is illiberal because it posits the idea of "government by the people" (from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address) as absolute and rejects all checks and balances on the popular will. While constitutional guarantees for minority rights and power-sharing safeguards are key features of liberal democracy, the populist counter-vision accepts no restrictions on the supremacy of the people (Mény & Surel, 2002; Abts & Rummens, 2007).

Second, it is illiberal because of its disdain for representative democracy – parliamentarians and career politicians are considered an elevated, unreliable elite. Representatives are only tolerated insofar as they "serve the people", whereas active politicians who can be controlled by voters only later on Election Day are mistrusted (Pappas, 2014). This disdain is not only directed toward mainstream parties but also toward other types of intermediaries such as the mainstream media. There would be a danger that the news media also impede the unhindered and unfiltered propagation of the will of the people. Politically friendly media, by contrast, serve as welcome allies of populists.

Third, the populist vision of democracy is illiberal because it opposes a pluralistic understanding of the people. In contrast, its notion of the people is that of a homogeneous, unified actor, leaving no room for minorities. Populist democracy assumes only one single cleavage in society, namely that between the people and the establishment (Caramani, forthcoming; Mudde, 2007, Pappas, 2014). The people speak with one voice and have one common will, and this common will also defines their identity. As in Carl Schmitt's "identitarian" model of democracy (see Abts & Rummens, 2007; Mancini, 2014), the populist vision of democracy is based on homogeneity, not equality. Where homogeneity is threatened by pluralism, it must be countered by cultural myths (that promote symbolic integration) and a constitutive distinction between insiders and outsiders, a polarity of friend and enemy.

This populist vision of democracy – despite the complexity of modern societies – reflects a simple, almost romantically idealized notion of politics (Kriesi, 2014). It is based on the assumption that the only acceptable form of democracy is the one whereby the people are addressed directly.

Abts and Rummens (2007) speak of immediate representation in the sense of direct presentation or embodiment. In this regard, a charismatic leader figure fulfills an important function – either as an individual or organization. This figure is not seen as member of an established elite but a challenger from the outside. The notion of a unifying leader (or a centralized, hierarchically led organization) corresponds to the notion of a homogeneous people. This figure is entrusted with representing the uniform will of the people – due to his or her authenticity, personality and bond with the people – whereas established institutions of mediation and representation cannot be trusted.

The main difference between the populist vision of democracy and liberal concepts of democracy lies in the rejection of institutional representation and pluralistic equality. The populist vision of democracy can be further differentiated from deliberative and participatory concepts of democracy by the rejection of a critical and open culture of discourse and unorganized grassroots initiatives on the local level. For this reason the will of the people is often described as “putative” (Hawkins, 2010).

As Kriesi (2012) reminds us, deliberative and participatory concepts of democracy were originally developed to account for the demands of social movements. They rely on transforming the power of rational discourse and critical-reflective opinion-making processes among highly informed and engaged individuals. Deliberative and participatory democracy encourages individuals to engage in self-initiated and unrestrained debates and weigh opposite views. Ideally, all viewpoints are introduced and heard (often brought forward by representatives) and should ideally all be part of the decision-making process.

The populist vision of democracy is not interested in such an understanding of participation as critical reflection (Kriesi, 2012). After all, the people’s will cannot be “constructed” through extensive deliberation but manifests itself by “popular acclamation” and other forms of direct expression (Abts & Rummens, 2007). The leader – as individual or collective actor – requires the involvement of citizens only as supporters and an expression of the alleged will of the people. Any further participation or empowerment is neither intended nor required (Kriesi, 2012). The idea of a pluralistic debate between opposite viewpoints and their articulation and aggregation through competing parties (Caramani, forthcoming; Mair, 2002) runs contrary to the populist notion of a homogeneous, uniform will of the people.

Thus, the populist vision of democracy reveals many parallels to delegative democracy. Kriesi (2012) argues that delegative democracy also corresponds to a monolithic model of representation. As introduced by O’Donnell (1994), delegative democracy is based on majoritarianism, namely the premise that “whoever wins elections to the presidency is thereby entitled to govern as he or she sees fit, constrained only by the hard facts of existing power

relations and by a constitutionally limited term of office” (p. 59). As with the populist vision of democracy, the winner of the elections is considered “the embodiment of the nation and the main custodian and definer of its interest” (p. 60). Typically, such a winner presents him- or herself as standing above both political parties and organized interests. Like the populist version of democracy, delegative democracy empowers a single individual/political organization to represent the will of the people for a certain number of years. As in the populist version of democracy, “the nation and its authentic political expression, the leader and his movement, are postulated as living organisms” (O’Donnell, 1994, p. 60).

However, there are also relevant differences, as Kriesi (2012) notes. He writes: “Unlike the populist version of democracy, delegative democracy does not rely on continuous appeals to the people, providing for more direct forms of citizen participation. Once in power, the winner of elections in delegative democracies remains aloof for the legislative period. Finally, delegative democracy allows for vertical accountability – the winner of the last elections may lose the next elections, an element which it shares with liberal democracy, but mechanisms of horizontal accountability, which are very important for the liberal element in liberal democracy, are weak or non-existent in such regimes.”

It is noteworthy that the populist tendencies in delegative democracies – one may think of Alberto Fujimori in Peru, Evo Morales in Bolivia, Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, or Vladimir Putin in Russia – have often created symbiotic relationships between these charismatic leaders and the mass media (Voltmer, 2012). However, not only in Latin America but also in Europe and North America, personalization, the skillful creation of pseudo-events, appeals to the man on the street and the use of anti-elite rhetoric are considered attractive ingredients of a good news story.

Populism has in most cases been conceived as a challenge and even a threat to democracy. As the discussion above indicates, however, it is above all a threat to a certain conception of democracy that is very much based on the responsible party model (APSA, 1950). With the transformation of this model in the last decade toward the cartel party model (Katz & Mair, 1996), populism appears therefore as a challenge to a perceived degeneration of party democracy in which no real alternatives between parties are on offer and thus in which no real competition takes place. This makes it easy for populists to pitch their claims against the whole political establishment. Accordingly, some have regarded populism as a “corrective” (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012) because populist parties offer precisely the “agonistics” (as intended by Laclau or Mouffe) that politics lacks in the era of the cartel party. Furthermore, in recent times, this challenge has, thus far, remained within the frame of the liberal democratic state. In contrast to the inter-war period, populists mobilize as political parties themselves. By participating in the electoral competition as parties, populists therefore legitimize and vindicate party democracy itself.

Chapter 3: Populism in Historical Context: Favorable Opportunity Structures

In Europe and North America, the historical development of politics-related and media-related opportunity structures has worked in tandem with the rise of populism. To understand the role of these opportunity structures, we will first address relevant socio-economic structures that underpin the support for populism and the changing social structures that account for the rise of populism in recent decades. The political literature on new parties that have emerged since the 1970s has identified their origin in the structural change (class and culture, in terms of either religiosity or emancipative values); similarly, the emergence of populist parties has been linked to class transformation (economic dimension) and migration patterns (cultural dimension) with the rise of segments of so-called “losers of globalization” as a new electoral constituency.

Next, we will explore the growing importance and changing logic of the media as another component of the opportunity structures that favored the rise of populism in Western democracies. The relevant communications literature perceives a convergence of goals between populist parties and mass media. The resulting “media complicity” (Mazzoleni, 2006) finds its expression in an increasingly cynical portrayal of established parties, a spreading of political malaise by highlighting controversial and polarized issues, a growing sensationalism and hunger for the extreme and provocative, a strong interest in charismatic personalities and a growing populism within the media itself.

Political conditions

Most analyses in the political domain start from the concept of cleavage, namely socio-economic and cultural divisions of society mobilized by political organizations (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967; Bartolini & Mair, 1990). Typically, cleavage models identify the origins of liberal, conservative and ethno-regionalist parties in the state-church and center-periphery cleavages created by state formation and nation-building in the 19th century (national revolution) and of agrarian and socialist parties in the rural-urban and workers-employers (class) cleavages created by industrialization and urbanization (industrial revolution). While further transformations such as the Soviet Revolution of 1917 had the effect of dividing the left into communist and socialist camps, the literature has then stressed the remarkable stability of party systems until the 1970s. At that point, both international and economic security led to the generational cleavage between materialist and post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1977), expressed primarily in social movements (civil rights, pacifism, feminism and environmentalism) with little impact on party organizations with the exception of the emergence of the greens in the early 1980s.

Yet, while long-term studies based on aggregate data (Bartolini & Mair, 1990) suggested stability, studies based on individual data (Dalton et al., 1984; Crewe & Denver, 1985; Franklin et al., 1992) highlighted patterns of de-alignment and re-alignment. It is here that the first analyses of the impact of socio-economic transformations on the rise of populism must be placed. Much more than having an impact on the “new left” (greens in particular), the transformations due to the declining secondary sector and post-industrial society, the globalization of the economy, the cross-border mobility of workers and the delocalization of production had an impact on the “new right” and populism in Europe (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Ignazi, 2003). Specific to Europe, others have identified European integration as a critical juncture comparable to those of the 19th century in creating a “sovereignty” dimension of contestation between supra-national integration and national independence (Marks and Wilson, 2000; Marks and Steenbergen, 2002). More systematically, Bartolini (2005) has analyzed the process of European integration following the models of center formation, system-building and political structuring that were originally developed at the level of the nation-state (Caramani, 2004), following earlier attempts to analyze cleavages from a comparative politics perspective (Hix, 1994).

While in this approach, socio-economic and cultural structures play a central role in accounting for the rise and decline of new political actors, the actual “translation” is not determinist. Rather, it depends on political opportunity structures created by the possibility of alliances and trade-offs (Rokkan, 1970; Kitschelt, 1995) and on institutional opportunity structures created by electoral systems, presidentialism and degree of centralization (Kriesi et al., 2006). The entire cleavage model, in fact, distinguishes cleavage structures from party systems and avoids regarding the latter as a mere reflection of the former. The extent to which cleavages are politicized involves agency and choices by specific actors. It is in this sense that cross-country variation is explained. Where we observe a clear gap is to expand the concept of opportunity structures to the cultural sphere and to elements of legacies of past political experiences in the 20th century.

The mobilization of electoral constituencies (hitherto loyal to a more or less radical left depending on the country) by populist parties should be linked precisely to such changes in political opportunity structures. Patterns of convergence on the economic left-right dimension by all mainstream parties but particularly of social democrats (Kitschelt, 1994) have opened up opportunities for fresh mobilization by radical actors of left and right (see, in particular, the thesis concerning the alliance of the extremes of the spectrum and of the “inverted U-curve”, Hooghe et al., 2002). The coupling of such converging patterns by mainstream parties with an equivalent movement on the cultural axis – namely with trans-border mobility of workers and businesses – has opened up opportunities for fresh mobilization, particularly on the radical right end of the spectrum. This convergence in Europe has largely been caused by social democrats espousing

European integration (which they initially opposed) and the consequent loss of economic and monetary policy instruments at the national level, as well as an increased flexibility in nationally unprotected labor markets. It is therefore in this sense that anti-European stances overlap with national-centric affirmation of identities in lower classes.

The “losers of globalization” are structurally identified with low skills, below-average levels of education, SME firms that are ill equipped to face global competition, agricultural producers and, more generally, with low network and human capital. While initially populist parties successfully mobilized this core constituency, following the financial crisis, this constituency has expanded to include middle-classes, thereby allowing such parties to reach high percentages of electoral support, most notably in diverse countries such as Austria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, and Sweden. In most of these countries, electorates are mobilized precisely by the combination of factors mentioned above: anti-immigration, anti-European integration, and anti-liberal market economy. Even if some have identified economic liberalism as an element of the anti-establishment nature of these parties, over time, the elements of welfare protection, state intervention, “national-first” policies in housing and labor, anti-Euro, etc. prove the “statist”, rather than liberal, nature of their policy proposals.

The thesis that the rise of populist parties can be traced back to globalization as a new cleavage has been contested by authors claiming that this dimension is subsumed in the existing cleavage structures. According to this view, the political space remains two-dimensional (socio-economic and cultural), and the change takes place in the content of the existing cleavages (Kriesi et al., 2006) rather than in the addition of a new one, as maintained by others (Warwick, 2002). The content of the cultural dimension in particular has changed from cultural liberalism to immigration and, consequently, has become more salient than the socio-economic dimension.

Media conditions

Changes in European party systems and electoral constituencies under the influence of globalization and economization have occurred in close connection to changes in media structures and political communication cultures. It is important to observe that the relevance of the mass media as the main mode of communication between political actors and the general public has vastly increased across Western Europe. This process, conceptualized as the “mediatization of politics”, has proceeded through various stages over the past half-century (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999).

In *first phase* until the mid-1960s, a party-dominated communication system prevailed in which the messages of political actors – substantial if at times partisan in nature – enjoyed fairly

ready access to the mass media. The voting behavior of citizens followed group-based loyalties and prior political allegiances, and their media use was driven by selectivity and reinforcement.

In the *second phase* until the early 1990s, television became the central platform for political communication. It penetrated all sectors of the electorate, even those with individualized, consumer-oriented, secularized and distant-to-politics lifestyles, and thereby enlarged the audience for political communication. To cope with the demands of the new medium, the parties had to adjust to the tricks, presentational formats and preferred news values of the new medium. To access the news and shape the media agenda, political actors began to develop of what slowly became the 'model of the modern campaign' (Swanson & Mancini, 1996), drawing on insights from political marketing, public opinion research advertising and news management. This happened in response to changes in the journalism profession. While in the first phase, an educational paradigm and a social responsibility for providing impartial and serious information prevailed (in many West European systems underscored by public service obligations for national TV and radio channels), a shift took place in the second phase that gave way to a more pragmatic, proactive and interventionist understanding of the media's role in politics. Among journalists, an increased awareness of autonomy and importance arose from the fact that the mass media had become the dominant source of information (and potential influence) for citizens and that the media had attained independent power to set the political agenda and frame the public image of politics.

The third phase in Blumler and Kavanagh's (1999) framework of the mediatization of politics refers to the current age of media abundance. Political communications are reshaped by (i) a professionalization of political public relations and image management designed to constrain journalists' reporting options, (ii) a growing pressure of competition in the media that drives substantive news reporting to the fringes, (iii) a multiplication of platforms and agendas favoring specialist interests, extreme voices and new political challengers, (iv) a fragmented, decontextualized and Balkanized style of information reception, and finally, (v) an anti-elitist populism practiced by the wide-ranging news media. This last feature is of particular interest.

In the current third since the 1990s, the media contribute to a "populist zeitgeist" (Mudde, 2004) in several ways. The first concern is that the media deepen the public's disenchantment with established parties by describing their actions as motivated primarily by conspicuous self-interests, tactical considerations and strategic purposes. These stories often evince a cynical undertone when exposing dubious means for reaching established parties' goals or when highlighting their misconduct or inadequacies. This reporting style is likely to undermine trust in mainstream parties and in their perceived legitimacy. The ensuing climate of cynicism and

disenchantment provides a fertile ground for the messages of populist outsiders (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999).

This sense of political malaise – an important precondition for the growth of anti-politics sentiments – can be further aggravated by prioritizing issues that trigger a sense of threat. Issues that offer great opportunities for generating attention, mobilizing response and enticing outrage are immigration, crime, and identity politics. By setting these issues on the media agenda, citizens will be primed toward those movements and parties that claim to own these issues. In addition, these new players receive legitimacy for addressing supposedly relevant and pressing concerns.

Mazzoleni (2008) understands this one-sided fixation on what generates sales figures, viewing figures and click rates as “media populism”. It contributes to a populist zeitgeist not only through discrediting established parties and promoting emotional issues (see previous points) but also through a new type of discourse that is no longer paternalistic but more oriented toward what ordinary people find interesting, engaging and accessible (our third point). Blumler and Kavanagh (1999) argue that in the third age of political communication, media organizations are driven to seek ways of making politics more palatable to audience members, and politicians are pressured to apply new techniques to assiduously court popular support. However, Blumler and Kavanagh also fear that the quality of public debate will suffer when emotional and affective responses to political problems outbalance cognitive and rational ones and when political and media agendas shift toward issues considered important to be readily understood by a mass audience, particularly moral issues of social conduct, social order and cultural identity.

A fourth and related point is the media’s demand for the spectacular, emotional and sensationalist framing of social political issues and for a strong preference for personalized story telling. As the presence of a leader willing and able to exploit the opportunities outlined here is a crucial precondition for the success of a populist movement (see Pasquino, 2008), the media’s interest in personalities promoting controversial issues in dramatic appearances is another contributing factor.

In sum, the growing convergence between the operating logic of popularized media and populist parties is another key component that needs to be accounted for in a ‘historical’ understanding of the relevant opportunity structures.

Conclusions

Beginning with the political conditions, the scientific contributions of the last years that follow the socio-economic approach have made it possible to analyze populism in its development since the 1970s in terms of the transformation of cleavage structures. On the one hand, this literature has failed to provide a link with previous historical phases of strong populist challenge, namely,

between World War I and II but also previously, as in Russia with the *narodnik* movement circa 1875 and in North America with the People's Party in the South and Midwest between 1891 and 1912. World War II various examples of populism distinct from purely extreme-right ideologies can also be seen in Europe (Poujadisme, *Uomo qualunque*) and in Latin America in various ideological forms and occasionally with the transformation from movement into regime in the course of the 20th century as in the case of Vargas in Brazil, Peron in Argentina and the APRA in Peru. On the other hand, this literature has failed to analyze populism as a concrete possibility of regime change with a different conception of "democracy" as discussed further above.

Macro-historical analysis allows us to make both links. Classical studies have analyzed, in terms of structures of production and class alliances, the conditions for the success of specific regimes – liberal democracy, communism and fascism. The last type of regime is particularly relevant for populism, as many contemporary parties have roots in illiberal conceptions of "democracy", tyranny of the majority, lack of checks-and-balances and nationalist identity politics. This work, which includes pioneering studies such as Moore (1966), Skocpol (1979), Rogowski (1989), Luebbert (1991), and Acemoglu and Robinson (2006), among others, has pointed to dramatically diverging patterns among European countries with different regimes imposing themselves on different countries. Whether on the basis of agrarian structures, levels of state capacity, outcomes of wars, state finances and debt or on the basis of varying alliances and coalitions among labor, land and capital, countries were directed on different trajectories. Contemporary populist movements receive inspiration from similar incarnations of these regimes, most notably in the form of "competitive authoritarianism" (Levitsky & Way, 2010), in countries such as Russia, or in Latin America, where neo-populist "Bolivarian" democracies have emerged.

Globalization in general and, in Europe, supra-national integration specifically represent a critical juncture that modifies socio-economic structures, social and cultural divisions, identities and modes of representation in ways that are comparable with previous historical junctures in the 19th and 20th centuries. While parallel elements in the processes of de-nationalization can be identified with previous ones, a peculiarity of the present moment is represented by the convergence of political and media logic.

From a communications perspective, the relevant literature has studied the link between media and populism mainly through the lens of mediatization of politics. This development toward a media-constructed public sphere entails three distinct phases, of which the most recent– the "third age of political communication" (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999) – is characterized by several features of which an anti-elitist popularization and populism in the media is of particular interest. It occurs alongside a simultaneous professionalization of political publicity and campaigning techniques by parties, a growing commercialization of journalism, a diversification of channels with

openings for new political claims and would-be persuaders, and a radical segmentation of the political audience. This has, in the view of Blumler and Kavanagh (1999), provided ideal opportunity structures for populist communicators, and it has also allowed new bottom-up impulses that question the established communication hierarchy. It is important to see these trends in the context of wider processes of social change, such as modernization (fragmenting social organization and fuelling identity politics), individualization (favoring a more consumer-oriented approach toward political gratifications), secularization (reduced status of official politics and party identifications, skepticism toward established elites), economization (subordinating journalism to market-based criteria) and aestheticization (encouraging closer associations of politics with popular culture).

Finally it is important to acknowledge that the rise of populism has beneficial aspects. It offers an opportunity to discuss the chances for more active mass participation and a more inclusive and discursive model of politics (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999).

Chapter 4: Political Populism and the News Media

As an intermediary between the political institutions (occupied by “elites”) and civic society (the “people”), mass media have assumed a potentially powerful role for communicating populist messages. We will proceed by first focusing on the question of why the modern mass media are so influential to in the first place. In a second step, we examine existing theoretical assumptions regarding the relations among populism, elites, the people and the media. Third, we will discuss recent empirical studies that explicitly considered the role of the media for a more comprehensive understanding of populism.

Political significance of mass media

Modern democracy relies on communication between politicians and citizens, and the mass media proffer themselves as an effective and independent medium for just that purpose. Interestingly, mass media perform a double role as self-interested actor and facilitating infrastructure. As a multi-channel infrastructure, they are capable of offering politicians opportunities to address broad segments of the population or tailor their messages to specific voter groups. Mass media are also important for voters. The media make it easier for them to inform themselves about politics and to choose from a variety of sources, depending on, for instance, how liberal or conservative they want the reporting to be.

The media have proliferated to such an extent that some observers speak of a media democracy (Jarren, 2008). Owing to this penetration, the media can demand the attention and recognition of society as a whole, and citizens and politicians alike are increasingly dependent on newspapers, radio, television, and accompanying websites for their informational needs. Journalists working at these outlets typically gather statements from several sources, weave a selection of those statements together with other material to actively construct a news story from it, and retain control over the key message and interpretive framing of that story until publication. This conforms to the principles of media independence and freedom of the press in a democracy. However, politicians are unwilling to completely relinquish control over the political communication process. Parties and governments each have their own communication staff and PR experts who help them to proactively place their messages in the media and react to news reports unfavorable to them.

Politicians are eager to appear in lead stories and on TV to publicly demonstrate how responsive they are to “the people”. Oftentimes, they want to show how deeply committed they are to the interests of the public and how greatly they therefore deserve the support of the citizens on Election Day. Politicians use the news media to learn what worries the public (and expect

journalists to research these concerns in part for them), and they use the media to present proposals that offer remedies for these concerns (and expect journalists to report on them favorably, or at least fairly). However, politicians responsible for the failure of a proposed solution must assume that they will be held accountable. There is therefore an expectation that free media will disclose fiascoes and name those responsible – not just at election time but throughout the political cycle.

In addition to providing transparency and checks-and-balances in their information and watchdog role, the news media serve as a mediator between “the people” and the ruling “elites”. In this role as intermediary, democratic theory expects the media to ensure that the preferences of the public are heard. This is aided by pluralist and inclusive news coverage that serves as a mediated proxy for the public sphere. In addition, the news media can assume the role of a champion of the people. Here, the news media serve as advocates for particular political programs and perspectives and mobilize people to act in support of these programs. By providing information and analysis, as well as critical scrutiny, public representation and advocacy, the news media have moved toward the center of the democratic process. They provide a shared forum that other political institutions and social actors increasingly use as an arena for their interaction.

Whether the news media fulfill their intended democratic functions in practice has become a matter of fierce debate. Critics highlight problematic trends of media commercialism and media cynicism that undermine journalists’ ability to be objective, pluralistic, and conscious of society’s needs. They claim that many democracies are driven and deformed by media organizations that find pleasure (and professional and commercial satisfaction) in interfering with political processes. The information value and orientation value of their public affairs coverage is said to be decreasing due to a growing fixation on sensation, conflict, drama, triviality and negativity – all of which is expected to foster political alienation (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995; Lloyd, 2004; Patterson, 1993, 2002). In its extreme, this scenario expects societies to turn into “mediacracies” in which informed citizenry and traditional political institutions are deteriorating beyond recognition (Meyer, 2002). These trends are investigated under the rubric “mediatization of politics”, defined as a long-term process through which the importance of the media and their spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors have increased (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014)

A counter-scenario regards politicians not as victims but beneficiaries of mediatization. Here, politicians govern with and through the media and rely heavily on strategic communication and news management. Many actors in the political system have in recent years professionalized their self-presentational skills. They did so by establishing and upgrading ‘media relations’ units and staffing them with experts whose task it is to tailor all political output to media demands. The imperative of professionalizing political publicity holds “that attending to communication through

the media is not just an add-on to political decisions but is an integral part of the interrelated processes of ... policy-making and government itself” (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 214). Under the conditions of media democracy, self-presentation by political actors has gained enormously in importance (Esser & Spanier, 2005). Whereas political scientists describe its function innocuously as “communicative representation” (Mansbridge, 2009) and journalists sometimes pejoratively as “spin doctoring” (Esser, 2008a), we describe it as “self-mediatization”, i.e., as self-initiated stage-management of politics by means of strategic communication in an effort to master the new rules that govern access to the public sphere (cf. Meyer, 2002). It is a reflexive response by the political system to media-related changes in their institutional environment. This process has therefore also been described as “reflexive mediatization”, whereby political actors take advantage of media services, anticipate their effects, and exploit them through strategic communication for their own purposes (Marcinkowski & Steiner, 2014).

Social media and Web 2.0 further accelerate and emphasize these processes. For the audience, they mean an explosion of available information; for politicians, they can be a means to bypass the “gate-keepers” of traditional news by speaking directly to an audience (e.g., Canovan, 2002; Taggart, 2002). These platforms allow politicians to communicate their messages without any selective filtering or re-framing by journalists (e.g., Chadwick, 2013). Social media allow interconnectivity, and thus the audience can respond directly to the claims of politicians, which might make the latter appear closer to the people than they would appear in traditional mass media. Thus, the World Wide Web has to be included alongside traditional media in a sophisticated and inclusive analytical model of populism and the media.

Conceptualization of populism in the mass media

There are no conclusive theoretical frameworks available on the interaction among populism, elites, the people and the mass media. In the following, we summarize relevant assumptions, arguments and conceptualizations relevant to an initial understanding of the connection between political populism and mass media.

Gianpietro Mazzoleni was one of the first communication scholars to develop a longstanding interest in this relationship. His arguments can be summarized in three points: First, there is a sort of hidden structural “complicity” between popular media and populist movements. Mass-market popular media are assumed to have an affinity for populist political movements because they employ similar communication strategies in their attempt to attract the widest possible attention for their messages. Second, highbrow media targeting more upscale audiences are assumed to defend the political elites (and act as their “paladins”) because both groups are interested in maintaining the socio-political status quo. Third, mass-oriented media outlets and populists

depend on one another: Mass media are assumed to welcome populist actors because they have news value and tap in the media's hunger for extreme behaviors and events. Populists rely on mass media because they need them to reach out to the people in a more direct way than via political institutions (see Mazzoleni 2003, pp. 15-17; 2008, pp. 62-64; 2014, p. 54). In light of these considerations, one could hypothesize that tabloid media tend to favor populism while up-market media tend to oppose it. Furthermore, Mazzoleni (2014) has introduced the key thought that some media can act as populist actors themselves. Building upon this last idea, Krämer (2014) argues that the media can engage in media populism by contributing to the construction of in-groups and out-groups, to hostility toward elites, to the spread of provocative emotions, and to the appeal of charisma and moral sentiments.

Research overview of populism in the mass media

The available research suggests that the relationship between mass media and populism is that they are two sides of the same coin. For instance Bos and Brants (2014) distinguish between two "guises of media populism: the media being receptive to populism and journalist being populist themselves" (p. 5). The first aspect focuses on how media serve as a platform for populist actors. Research in this field investigates how the media cover the activities and messages of populist actors, how they treat them in their coverage, and whether this may promote or hinder the visibility, concerns and success of populist actors. We refer to this perspective as incoming populism processed by the media (see Esser, Ernst, Büchel & Engesser, 2016).

The second aspect of media populism focuses on whether media outlets themselves can act or be labeled as populist actors by using different strategies and styles that are comparable with those that populist actors use. This perspective focuses on the question of whether media actors adopt various strategic or stylistic elements of populism. Research in this area mainly investigates the extent of populist discourse from journalists within different types of media organizations. We refer to this second perspective as media construction of populist content. The two perspectives will in the following be discussed separately for analytical reasons, although in practice they often co-occur in combination. In the first perspective, the media assume the role of intermediary, whereas in the second, they act as initiators and independent producers of populist messages (Esser, Ernst, Büchel & Engesser, 2016)

In addition, there is a third perspective that focuses on user-generated content publicized on media platforms. This entails various forms of citizen journalism (in the broadest possible sense) and different types of self-presentation by political actors (for instance, on party websites or social media sites such as Twitter or Facebook) (for this tripartite division of perspectives, see also Esser, Stepinska & Hopmann, 2016). The following remarks will be limited to research on the

first two perspectives, as they focus more on media as social institutions and their relationship with populism.

Media processing of populist input

From this perspective, existing studies focus on two different aspects of the relationship between populist actors and media outlets as a platform: first, the importance of media visibility for explaining the success of populist actors or their issues and, second, the use of specific communication strategies and styles by populist politicians and parties when presenting themselves in the media.

Regarding the first aspect, Plasser and Ulram (2003), Biorcio (2003) and Birnenbaum and Villa (2003) qualitatively analyze the role of the media in the development and success of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in Austria, the Lega Nord in Italy and the Front National in France. All of these authors conclude that the media played a crucial role in the success of these parties, and Plasser and Ulram moreover contend that the success of the FPÖ has depended on media attention much more than the other parties did. The quantitative studies by Walgrave and Swert (2004) and Boomgaarden and Vliegthart (2007) explore the extent to which newspapers and TV stations have contributed to the success of the populist parties in Belgium and the Netherlands. Both studies found that the media coverage of immigration (and for the Vlaams Blok in Belgium also crime) played an instrumental role. In addition, Boomgaarden and Vliegthart show that the more the media reported on immigration-relevant topics, the higher the aggregate vote share for Dutch populist parties became. Both studies focus on highly typical populist issues and examine their effect on the success of selected populist parties in the respective country. Another study adopting a similar approach examines media attention, issue ownership and party strategies of the SVP in Switzerland (Udris, 2012). The content analysis of six Swiss newspapers (quality, tabloid and Sunday press) over a seven-year period (2002 to 2009) yielded three major findings: First, the SVP emphasizes in particular the issues of immigration and Europe but also makes use of other issues. Second, the media image of the SVP is one of a proactive, powerful party that generates turmoil in the party landscape. Third, commercially oriented media outlets devote more attention to the SVP than do up-market newspapers.

With regard to the second aspect, several studies focus on the media coverage of populist actors by analyzing their communication strategies or styles. Because the dependent variables of those studies were not only the presentation or prominence of populist actors, the authors had to clarify how these populist strategies and styles were operationalized. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) define populism first and foremost as a “communication style” by dividing the three core elements of populism (people, anti-establishment and exclusion) into a thin and a thick conceptualization of

populism. The thin definition of populism is considered a political communication style employed by political actors that refer to the people (p. 322). If the thin concept of populism is combined with anti-establishment and exclusion, the populist communication style is defined as “thick” (p. 323). Thick populism comprises a more classical and restrictive meaning of populism, and as Jagers and Walgrave argue, “fill[s] in the empty shell of thin populism” (p. 324). Building on this conceptualization, Cranmer (2011) defines populist communication as a communication style that refers to the people and can be employed by different political actors for different purposes. In contrast to Jagers and Walgrave (2007), who code all reference to the people, Cranmer considers such references populist only if a political actor claims that he or she defends the will of the people, is accountable to the people and/or legitimizes his or her claim by referring to the people. For the thick concept of populism, she also identifies anti-establishment references and the exclusion or denunciation of certain societal groups. Additionally, Cranmer adds a homogeneity indicator to the concept of thick populism, which measures whether an in-group or its values were portrayed as being attacked by an out-group.

In contrast, Bos, van der Burg, and de Vreese (2010; 2011) define populism as the combination of stylistic elements (e.g., highly emotional, slogan-based and tabloid-style language) and substantive rhetoric (hostility toward representative politics/established order and identification with the people). The substantive rhetoric was measured by the two core aspects of populist ideology: anti-establishment appeal and the celebration of the homeland. The populist style was operationalized with three aspects: referring to a crisis situation, straightforwardness, simplicity and clarity, and emphasis on strong (charismatic) leadership as problem manager. In a recent publication following up on work by Ruzza and Fella (2011), Bos and Brants (2014) define populism by distinguishing three dimensions: ideas, styles and policies. The three dimensions are operationalized in relation to party leaders. Populist ideas were assessed by measuring whether a party leader criticized the political establishment or mentioned the common man. The style dimension was measured by statements concerning the party leader as a problem solver or decision-maker who uses intense language and depicts a situation as critical. Third, policies were measured by whether a party leader spoke negatively about certain groups or discussed immigration. All three dimensions were measured on a dichotomous scale.

From the operationalizations outlined thus far, it can be concluded that populism in the mass media can be understood in three ways: as a communication style, a combination of style elements and rhetoric, or a combination of ideas, styles and policies. After clarifying the operationalization, in the following, the results of studies focusing on politics-generated populism are presented.

Jagers and Walgrave (2007), Cranmer (2011) and Bos, van der Burg and de Vreese (2010) demonstrate that in many countries, political parties of all convictions refer to the people to some extent. References to the people (thin populism) should therefore be considered a political communication style that all parties, not solely fringe groups, use. Nonetheless, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) find the Vlaams Blok to be the party with the highest percentage of references to the people. This was particularly evident from the party's own election advertising but also appeared in the media coverage of the party in newspapers, TV news bulletins and political talk shows. The abovementioned studies further established a significant difference between the use of exclusion and anti-elitist strategies (thick populism) across different types of parties. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) demonstrate that the Vlaams Blok was the only political party that heavily criticized the elite and excluded specific parts of the population. This led the authors to conclude that the Belgian extreme-right party is a textbook example of thin and thick populism. Cranmer (2011) demonstrates that the Swiss People's Party used populist communication strategies much more often than did other Swiss parties. Bos, van der Burg and de Vreese (2010) find that populist leaders generally score higher on a populism scale than mainstream politicians, but the difference did not reach statistical significance. However, the controversial leader of the Dutch Party for Freedom, Geert Wilders, scored highest on the populism scale. Wilders was also at the center of a study by Van der Pas, de Vries and van der Burg (2011) that examines whether his electoral success could be traced back to how often the media portrayed him as a convincing leader. The results indicate that Wilder's high media visibility, his self-confident media image and his media statements of a better vision for the future did not win him any additional votes. Additionally, Bos, van der Burg and de Vreese (2011) investigate how the media shaped perceptions of populist leaders in relation to their electoral success and find no significant difference between populist and mainstream party leaders. Hence the authors conclude "that leaders of right-wing populist parties are just as dependent upon the media as leaders of other parties" (Bos et al., 2011, p. 182).

Bos and Brants (2014) conducted a longitudinal content analysis in the Netherlands, covering seven elections over nearly 20 years from 1994 to 2012. They not only investigated the growth and spread of populism in the media, the differences among the three dimensions (ideas, styles and policies), and differences in the usage of those dimension across different parties but also the prominence and differences in the coverage of populism in different media genres. For the latter, they distinguished between "free publicity" media outlets (newspapers, TV-news programs and political talk shows) and "controlled publicity" in party political broadcasts. The study found no support for an expected rise in populist messages in party election broadcasts and leader portrayals in news reports. Moreover, in 2012, the election year in which Wilders performed

relatively poorly, populism almost completely disappeared from the news media. A move in the opposite direction was found in party election broadcasts. Here a general increase in populist rhetoric could be traced back to its greater use by mainstream parties. This increase since 2006 relates to style and ideas but not to policies.

Media construction of populist content

There are far fewer empirical studies focusing on media-generated populism. One problem is that to this date no viable operationalization of media-initiated populism has been proposed. The existing studies, due to their selective measurements, hardly allow for a conclusive assessment. Nevertheless, they represent an interesting starting point. For instance, Akkerman (2011) and Rooduijn (2013) investigate whether debates in mass-market newspapers are more populist (by being more sympathetic toward populist actors) than up-market newspapers. Both studies found no difference between the two newspaper types. Akkerman (2011) concludes that tabloid newspapers do not have an anti-elitist bias. This is confirmed by Rooduijn (2013), who concludes that debates in tabloid media were not more populist overall than debates in quality newspapers. In addition, Bos and Brants (2014) conclude that populism is hardly the sole result of the media and certainly not a unique characteristic of tabloids. Hence, none of the three studies could find empirical evidence in support of Mazzoleni's "complicity and paladin" theory that he had introduced to describe the specific contributions of tabloid and elite media. Bos and Brants (2014) also included political talk shows in their analysis and conclude, that compared to other formats, talk shows are the most outspoken populist genre. Rooduijn (2013) further discovers that over the last two decades, the debates in the Dutch newspapers have become more populist and that the degree of populism is strongly related to the success of populist parties. All studies agree that tabloid newspapers do not provide a more favorable discursive opportunity structure for populist parties than quality newspapers and do not provide more resonance for populist politicians than elite newspapers.

Conclusion

The media assume a powerful role for the political communication flows in modern democracies. The proliferation of communication channels into all social spheres, the growing competition for attention and influence, the growing efforts undertaken by politicians to control information and to manage their media image, and citizens increasingly turning their backs on established parties and traditional news providers have created a difficult and confusing situation. In view of the additional challenges posed by globalization and de-nationalization, populist messages in this information environment seem to strike a chord and find strong resonance in

politics, media and the public. To understand the role of the media in the growing spread of populist political communication, we suggested a three-fold division of research perspectives: media processing incoming populism (populism through the media); media actively constructing populist content (populism by the media); and populist user-generated content on media platforms (mediated user populism) (Esser, Ernst, Büchel & Engesser, 2016). Previous scholarship relating to these three perspectives is only in its infancy (Bos & Brants; 2014; Esser, Stepinska & Hopmann, 2016), and it is one of the central tasks of the NCCR Democracy to develop these perspectives further and translate them into empirically testable strategies.

Chapter 5: Shortcomings in Previous Research

In the chapters above, various strands of the extensive field of populism research were reviewed to provide an overview of the concept of populism and its relation to actors, communication, and culture. Despite the strong theoretical and empirical basis of most of these research strands, we have identified some shortcomings regarding the integration of different research traditions and research on specific topics, such as the role of mass media, long-term dynamics, and contextual factors. In this chapter, we briefly address these shortcomings before proposing an integrative framework for populism research that may help to combine results from different research traditions and disciplines to gain a deeper insight into this phenomenon.

No common understanding of populism

In light of the numerous efforts to arrive at a theoretical conceptualization of populism, a newcomer can easily become confused. Populism has been conceptualized as a “thin” or “thick ideology”, as a “strategy” or as a “style”. Unfortunately, these terms are not always used consistently in the wide variety of extant publications. We do not believe that any of these concepts are wrong, but they lack uniform and widely supported definitions. In addition, there is no superordinate theoretical framework that allows for the integration of these individual concepts and thereby an overall, multi-perspectival understanding of populism. Such a framework should combine three perspectives – populism as ideology, as strategy, and as style – and clarify their interrelationships.

It should also take into account another point: There are three constitutive elements of political populism, the people, elites and a leader. As these three elements are connected to one another in a distinctive way, a framework of populism should allow for an understanding of precisely how these elements relate to one another. In other words, it must be theorized as a *relational* concept, and its empirical analysis must also account for that.

In addition to these three core elements, further related aspects should be considered such as outgroups and the mass media. Furthermore, we believe that populism should be conceptualized as a gradual phenomenon: every politician tends to be “populist” to a degree; the important question is *how* populist they are. This can be determined by scrutinizing their statements. Finally, there should not be an *a priori* determined list of populist actors; instead, *all* relevant political actors should be examined with regard to their use of populist means.

Unclear role of mass media

Various populism studies have attempted, with great effort and expensive content analyses, to include the role of the media in their considerations. However, they have treated the media only

in terms of its function as a neutral and passive disseminator. This does not do justice to the political conditions of communication in many countries. In fact, the media often become actively involved in the political process, through the *selection* of topics and statements, through the type of *presentation* and prioritization, through interpretation and *framing* and through explicit and implicit *evaluations*. A more thorough understanding can be found in recent mediatization research (see the volume edited by Esser & Strömbäck, 2014).

Mediatization research understands the media on the one hand as an institutional context and on the other hand as an active participant in the political process. Accordingly, populism researchers must also bear in mind the self-interest of individual journalists, collective newsrooms or entire media enterprises. To account for journalists' own motivations, media organizations can be classified according to their political affiliation and worldview, their degree of commercial profit orientation and their journalistic quality standards. Furthermore, one needs to recognize that these different media types are embedded in a variety of media system types. National media systems can be classified in terms of various journalistic and political cultures, varying media-politics relationships and their degree of journalistic autonomy and media freedom. Many of the influential factors stated here have potential implications for the extent and the form of populism observable in a country's political communication. However, a systematic examination of these influential factors is practically non-existent in the current populism research literature. This is another research gap that we aim to address in an internationally comparative manner.

Political or media-specific populism?

Another peculiar aspect of previous populism research is that studies address either political populism or media populism but almost never consider both variants. Therefore, these two perspectives remain strangely unconnected. What is lacking is a systematic re-examination of their connection while also considering the potentially active contribution of the media. This active contribution by the media to the spread of populist messages can have various causes and can be reflected in media content in many different ways, but little is known about it thus far. In fact, the entire concept of media populism is even less clear than the shallow concept of political populism – there is still much to be done.

Overlooked dynamics

Processes of social change are never caused by only one factor, and hence the explanation of populist political communication must also take into account the interaction between media-specific and political factors (see chapter 3 for details). However, even within media systems, consideration must be given to the interaction between individual media organizations. Within the

inter-media-agenda-setting, there are opinion leaders and opinion-followers; there are herd effects and contagion effects with regard to reporting (particularly with scandalizations); there are media organizations that support or criticize certain populist politicians. For a study that is particularly interested in the largely overlooked political communication perspective, a design is needed that uses a large media sample and a long period of investigation. In the current research literature, one often searches in vain for such a study.

There are also reciprocal relationships among political actors that are, for example, reflected in continuous issue competition. Interesting effects can be found for mainstream parties that compete with right-wing populist parties. One previous study found that there is a tendency toward the adoption of right-wing topics. In Germany in the 1990s, this transformed some of the demands of right-wing parties into government policies because government parties adopted these right-wing demands in areas related to immigration and crime. Another study found that such adoption of positions can also be detected in left-wing government parties. Although there are signs of spillover effects from extreme to mainstream parties, this adoption of populist strategies and styles has not thus far received sufficient examination to reach an adequate understanding of these processes.

Taking a broad view

From the foregoing discussion, it can be easily understood that studies with an insufficient media sample or a far-too-narrow spectrum of political actors hardly permit meaningful conclusions about populist political communication. It is instead necessary to consider many different media types (with various ownership forms and editorial missions) and media formats (print, broadcast, online), as well as various communication platforms (journalism-based or social-media-based). With regard to the political side, it is equally important to examine the entire spectrum of political parties, not merely the allegedly populist ones.

Systems matter

It has already been mentioned that the macro-conditions of media and political systems influence the media's political reporting. The intensity and sharpness of the discourse is most likely caused by the historically developed relationship between media and politics, the political communication cultures and the commercially motivated audience orientation in media and politics, to name just a few factors. For this reason, the institutional and cultural opportunity structures need to be considered in a broad sample of countries, thereby allowing for a systematic examination of the supportive or detrimental conditions for populist communication. This requires

an internationally comparative research methodology, high-quality examples of which are seldom found in the current research literature.

It is our goal to alleviate some of these weaknesses with our ongoing research. We address these issues by first developing a coherent and exhaustive understanding of political and media populism and then translating these concepts into categories for our media content analyses and representative surveys. We will content-analyze a wide variety of political texts and media stories (party manifestos, politicians' press releases, print and audiovisual news reports, social media postings, etc.) and connect this analysis to effects in the general public (gauged through surveys). By combining the contributions of political actors, mass media and public opinion, our aim is to gain a comprehensive understanding of populism as a phenomenon that currently receives utmost attention in many circles.

Taken together, the interdisciplinary field of populism research currently lacks some key elements necessary for a common understanding of the causes, shape and effects of this phenomenon in contemporary societies. Unless the research on populism arrives at a common understanding and definition of its key concept and takes context factors, dynamics and non-political actors into account, thorough analyses of populism are difficult to perform.

Chapter 6: An Integrative Framework for Populism Research

To develop an integrative framework and produce, the empirical instruments for a comprehensive analysis of populist political communication and all the aspects discussed in the previous chapters have to be considered. The aim of this integrative framework is to lay a foundation for the development of research designs aimed at the investigation of populism on a societal or global level. Specifically, this entails an investigation of political and civil actors, media content, and public opinion from a diachronic or cross-cultural perspective.

The primary requirement for such a framework is a definition and conceptualization of populism that is equally applicable to the empirical and theoretical assessment of actors, communication, and attitudes. In addition to this generalized concept of populism, a set of empirical perspectives needs to be specified in which this concept can be applied. These perspectives may incorporate research designs from different traditions or disciplines. Finally, the concept of populism must be compatible with the empirical instruments developed within these empirical perspectives. Only if these requirements are met can results from different research perspectives be fruitfully combined and jointly contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of populism at a society-wide level. In this chapter, we first propose a generalized concept of populism before introducing empirical perspectives in which this concept may be used. In the next chapter, we demonstrate the applicability of this integrative framework by means of concrete operationalization of populist communication.

Generalized concept of populism

Scholars have defined populism either as ideology, as strategy or as style that may be applied by actors (Diehl, 2011; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012; Weyland, 2001). Like Kriesi (2012), we find it helpful to “keep these three notions of populism apart, but also to relate them to one another in a systematic way” (Kriesi, 2012, p. 1). Accordingly, we believe that there exists a populist ideology that may be present in the mindset of political actors. Moreover, one must recognize that populist political strategies and forms of communication may be employed for multiple tactical purposes, i.e., by actors with a little-developed populist ideology. Some rhetorical figures and means of presentation common among populists may be employed by a politician to mimic, to a certain degree, the external appearance of populism without sharing its inner meaning.

We propose a differentiated concept of populism that distinguishes between populist ideology and populist communication. Whereas populist ideology refers primarily to the mindset of populist actors, this mindset can be also found among the supporters and voters of populist actors. Similarly, populist communication will be defined in such a way that makes it applicable

not only to thoroughbred populist actors but also to those who employ it only in a superficial, hollowed-out manner.

Populist Ideology

In chapter 2, we introduced our definition of populism as a thin ideology that describes the relationship among the people, the elite and a populist actor. We also stated that this thin understanding of populism can be combined with other ideologies and thereby assume a thick meaning, which specifies who belongs to these groups and who does not. According to van Dijk's (1998: 48) socio-cognitive perspective, ideologies are a specific type of "mental representations". They are located in the minds of people and represent certain sets of beliefs that are shared by members of a group or society. In politics, ideologies provide "conceptual maps of the political world" and are specific "forms of political thinking" (Freedon, 1996, p. 76). This ideology is in reality difficult to detect, however, as it is not a manifest entity that is directly observable. The measurement of populism therefore has to focus on manifestations of this ideology in specific attitudes toward the people, the elite and the allocation of power, communication patterns expressing these attitudes, as well as a certain style of self-presentation reinforcing the content of these statements.

Drawing on previous literature, we defined populism in chapter 2 as a thin ideology that considers – through a Manichean outlook – society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and for the "good" people it postulates unrestricted sovereignty. This minimal and largely consensual definition implies three different constituents of populist ideology, each leading to specific attitudes, communication strategies, and styles. First, populist ideology includes a positive image of a monolithic or homogeneous people. Second, populist ideology includes a negative image of the elite, who are to blame for current problems. Third, populist ideology includes a vision of the allocation of power in which the people enjoy unrestrained sovereignty (meaning that constitutionalist elements such as the division of power among *several* institutions and the respect for the rights of minorities who are *not considered* part of the pure people are rejected) and in which the elites are relieved of their influence (as they represent institutions restraining the alleged will of the people). On a more abstract and basic level, populist ideology combines an advocative position toward the people and conflictual one toward the elites.

Based on this understanding, we define a populist frame of mind as a set of attitudes expressing each of these dimensions. On an abstract level, this means that a combination of positive attitudes toward the people and negative attitudes toward the elite may indicate populist ideology. Applying the three dimensions of populist ideology, three distinct attitudes constitute a

populist attitude and indicate populist ideology. First, as populist ideology comprises a positive image of a monolithic people, individuals holding this ideology perceive the people as a homogeneous mass and use positive attributes to describe it. Second, to account for the anti-elite stance, populist individuals hold a negative image of the government, the parliament, and possibly other elites. Third, mirroring the populist ideal of power allocation, populist attitudes hold that the people should gain power at the expense of the current ruling class.

As populist ideology subsumes all three dimensions, an individual would have to hold all three aspects of populist attitudes to be qualified as a populist. Neither the notion of a virtuous and homogeneous people nor elite criticism nor a demand for the people's sovereignty alone is considered populist in this framework. Only in combination do these attitudes indicate an underlying populist ideology.

Populist communication

Politicians use communication primarily to implement their political strategies and thereby gain popularity, win over voters and convince opponents and other political actors of their beliefs and values. Political strategies are guided by ideologies and through communication activities, such as publishing press releases and party manifestos and, primarily, through appearances in the media, and these ideologies become visible and transform from mental constructs into perceptible dimensions. The “internal organization of political thinking” receives an “external face” defined by specific “ways in which political ideas are presented in public, communicated to varied constituencies and made ‘persuasive’” (Finlayson, 2013, p. 197). Political actors use communication strategically to attain their political goals. Vice versa, the communication strategies used in public communication may indicate specific thin or thick ideologies held by the speaker.

For the identification and quantitative measurement, it is paramount to identify communication strategies indicating a populist ideology. These communication strategies must strictly derive from the concept of populist ideology to combine findings on ideology and communication in integrative research designs. In this framework, we use the three constituents of populist ideology to derive a set of communication strategies expressing support for them. Following this approach in the definition of populist communication strategies, they remain congruent with populist ideologies.

First, the notion of a monolithic and virtuous people may be mirrored in communication by statements explicitly indicating a monolithic people, statements defining this monolithic people by explicitly including and excluding groups of individuals, and statements stressing virtues and achievements of the people. Furthermore, populist actors may stress this people-centered ideology by expressing their own closeness to the people. Second, the negative attitude toward

the elite may be expressed by a variety of statements stressing negative attributes of the elite, blaming the elite for negative developments, and presenting the elite as a threat to or burden on the country. Third, the populist vision of power allocation may be expressed by statements demanding greater sovereignty for the people or denying power to the current ruling class.

Conversely, it has to be noted that there are communication strategies indicating a rejection of each constituent of populist ideology. Therefore, any statement describing a pluralist society, stressing negative attributes of the people or positive attributes of the elite, and demonstrating a personal distance from the people would be considered anti-populist communication strategies indicating remoteness from populist ideology.

As in the case of populist attitudes, employing communication strategies indicating support for only one constituent of populist ideology does not suffice to be categorized as a populist. Rather, communication patterns require the combination of different populist communication strategies and refraining from using anti-populist ones to be considered populist. Any communication pattern only including one of these communication strategies is not considered populist but merely people centered, anti-elitist or in favor of popular sovereignty.

While communication strategies refer to the content of communication and may be used to express support for a specific ideology, communication styles refer to the way this content is presented. They are but loosely connected to political ideology and serve other functions in a text. For example, they help to enhance the content of a message by making it more interesting and appealing or may be applied to stress the urgency of a statement or the gravity of a situation under discussion. In some cases, however, they may also be employed as a manner of self-presentation to indicate the position or ideology of the speaker. Based on the definition of populist ideology above, we may identify some communication styles with the potential to indicate populism.

First, to underscore claims of being close to the people and caring for them, populist actors may apply colloquial language, simplification, emotional language and a shirt-sleeved appearance. Second, to underscore the Manichean view of society and the stark contrast between the people and the elite, populist actors may apply absolutism or black-and-white rhetoric in their communication. Third, to stress the gravity of negative developments for which the elite are blamed, populist actors may use dramatization and scandalization. Finally, claims for more sovereignty for the people may be supported by references to the wisdom of the common man, the virtues of common sense and the actual simplicity of decisions.

Note, however, that these communication styles may not always be traced back to a populist ideology. Non-populist actors may use the same communication styles in an effort to increase the persuasiveness and attractiveness of a message (see Petersen, 2011; Deighton, Romer &

McQueen, 1989). Therefore, populist communication styles cannot be considered part of the definition of populism, and we advise against using these styles as indicators of populist ideology.

Moreover, mass media apply appealing communication styles such as personalization, dramatization, emotionalization or simplification for commercial considerations. Both up-market and down-market outlets are increasingly under pressure to package their news in audience-friendly ways to gain commercial success and public recognition in an increasingly competitive media market. Applying these communication styles in political affairs coverage is therefore not necessarily an indicator of populist ideology but of other media-specific pressures. Various scholars have noted a congruence of interests between populist actors and media outlets, leading at times to unintended complicity or an unholy alliance (Mazzoleni, 2006; Wirz et al., 2014).

Empirical perspectives

In this section, we will sketch out three empirical perspectives (or research paradigms) that may be applied in the integrative framework of populism research. Although other research paradigms may also be used, we believe that the procedural, cross-national and longitudinal paradigms described below are the most central. Applied in combination, these perspectives allow for in-depth analyses of causes and consequences of populism in modern societies.

The flow-of-communication perspective

As explained above, populist communication strategies are the communicative counterparts of the populist ideology. This has far-reaching consequences. First, defining and operationalizing populist communication strategies allows for their measurement by way of content analysis. Populist communications from political actors can be encountered and collected in the political interviews, party manifestos, political speeches, and press releases of political actors. Because the production of these texts is almost completely under the control of the political actors, they can be used as an analytical starting point for the flow of populist communication (also considering that political actors respond to other political actors, the media or the voters). Irrespective of which politician or party is speaking, the degree of populist communication in any text can be determined, thereby revealing how prevalent it is across the political spectrum. Then, this starting point can be used for comparisons with the populist communication found in the media. However, as mentioned above, the media cannot be reduced to passive transmitters of information provided by populist actors. Media are not simply mirrors of reality. Rather, journalists and media organizations must be conceptualized as active and conscious actors. There are various response patterns the media can display. The media can transmit some and ignore other populist communication strategies, lend relevance to certain strategies and express the irrelevance of others, support some claims

and reject others, emphasize certain stylistic elements used by political populists and down-play other stylistic elements, or a media outlet can behave in a populist manner itself by employing a media-specific set of populist strategies. In sum, the media can dramatically modify the flow of populist and non-populist communication, justifying their potentially active role. The media do not simply transmit political information; they transform it. Because of the predefined measurement of populist communication (strategies and styles), the abandonment of any a priori defined populist actors and the broad scope of analysis, the flow of populist communication can be traced and modifications can be detected easily.

The next step in the flow of communication refers to the role of citizens. Here, the definition of populist communication will not be helpful. As the populist attitudes described above rest on the same dimensions of populist ideology as the communication strategies, however, the success of populist communication in creating increasingly populist attitudes among the public may be measured along these three dimensions. Specifically, we define populist communication to be persuasive if an increase in populist strategies representing a specific dimension of populist ideology results in growing populist attitudes along this dimension.

Taken together, the coherent and synchronized measurement of the populist ideology with content analysis and questionnaires allows for a detailed analysis of the populist flow of communication. By following this approach, several of the abovementioned shortcomings can be addressed. Finally, because the operationalization of populist communication and populist attitudes is not specific to an issue or an actor, this research design can be used for studying any issue, any actor and any media outlet. In addition, inter-media agenda setting and co-orientation dynamics can be analyzed. Because of the “thin” definition of populism, its right- and left-wing variants can be examined equally with the same instrument.

Recall that the flow-of-communication is embedded in and influenced by respective political and media conditions (see chapter 3). It is self-evident that varying settings of political and media conditions have differential effects on the flow of political communication and the form and shape of populism. Here, the comparative approach is the most valuable for studying the varying contextual conditions under which these processes operate. By adopting either a cross-temporal or cross-spatial comparative perspective, we can analyze the effects of different political and media conditions on the flow of populist communication.

The cross-temporal perspective

Populism cannot be expected to remain constant over time. The ideology and communication strategies of populist actors, their portrayal in the media, and their success in the public underlie continuous change, just as the opportunity structures change within a given

country. Specifically, it is to be expected that changes in the political system, in international cooperation, and in the event environment may influence the visibility and success of populist actors (cf. Caramani, 2004).

To investigate this temporal change, populism needs to be investigated from a longitudinal perspective. Two different time-scales need to be applied to capture the changes in populism and populist communication over time.

First, the adaption of populism to changing opportunity structures in history, beginning from the constitution of democracy, may be investigated. In this line of research, the focus lies on the influence of wars, immigration streams, globalized economies, multilevel governance and denationalization tendencies or other factors on the success of populist political actors.

Second, the change in populist communication within legislative cycles may be investigated from a longitudinal perspective. Here, rapidly changing opportunity structures such as impending elections, current social issues, or the popularity of individual politicians may influence the public visibility and shape of populist communication.

To capture temporal variations in populist ideology and communication, we propose a two-channel approach assessing the self-presentation and mediated presentation of political actors over time. This assessment includes an analysis of populism in the party manifestos and press releases of most political actors and an analysis of political journalism over time. In both channels, the amount and style of populist communication may be assessed by means of quantitative content analysis and compared across and within political actors.

The cross-spatial perspective

While populism has been found to be a global phenomenon common to most democratic countries (cf. Albertazzi & MacDonnell, 2008), the form, visibility and success of populism varies across countries and cultures. The cultural heritage, national history, current pressing issues, political system, and media system of a country may all have an impact on populism (e.g., Groshek & Engelbert 2013). These factors may, on the one hand, change the visibility and electoral success of populist actors and, on the other hand, determine the amount of populist communication adopted by other political actors.

To investigate the impact of each of these factors on populism, the phenomenon of populism needs to be investigated from a cross-spatial perspective. Comparative designs thus must include the most similar and most different cases across different cultural and structural dimensions to pinpoint important opportunity structures.

To capture differences in populist communication and ideology across countries, we propose a mixed-methods approach including quantitative content analysis and cross-sectional

surveys. By means of quantitative content analysis, both the unedited populist communication in the press releases of political actors and their presentation in the media may be investigated. Moreover, a survey may be used to investigate the structure and strength of populist attitudes among the public. Combining these sources, differentiated images of populist communication within different countries may be compared and aligned with structural differences to determine influential factors for the success and shape of populism. Note that our definition and operationalization of populism does not include any obvious culture-specific aspect. Therefore, this conceptual approach to populism is also suitable for cross-cultural studies, although the independence of culture must ultimately be established empirically.

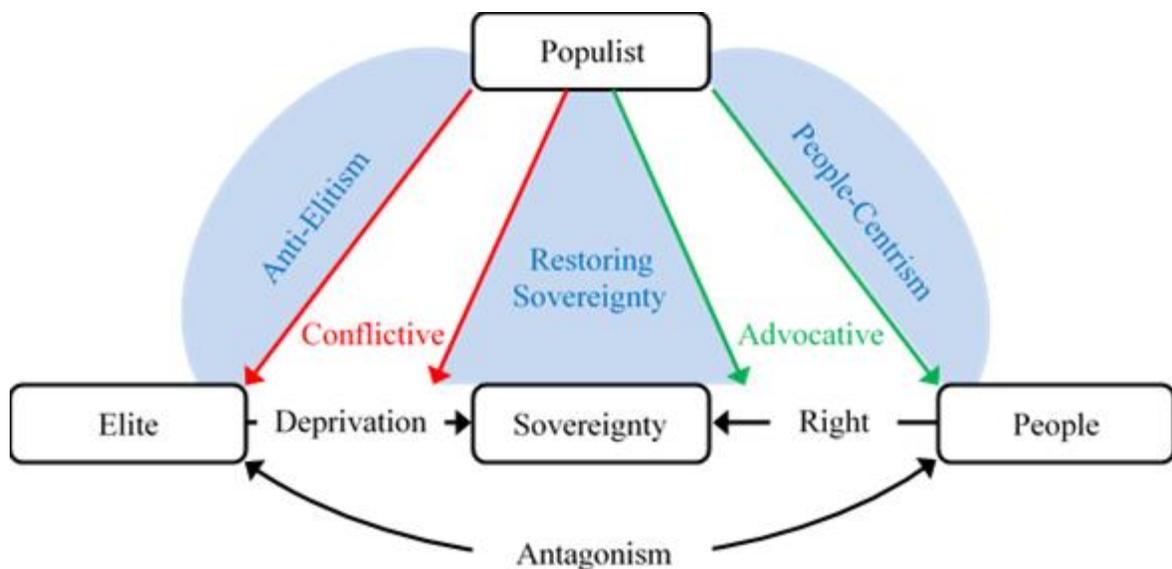
Chapter 7: Operationalization of Populism

In the outline of the research paradigm, we proposed an integrative framework for identifying and measuring populist communication and attitudes. These measurement concepts derive directly from our minimal definition of populist ideology and the three dimensions included in this definition. In this chapter, the measurement is substantiated in a brief description of populist communication strategies and attitudes that are used in this framework. To maintain the compatibility of different measurements, we develop all measurements on the basis of the generalized concept of populism.

As specified above, we understand populism in a broad sense as advocative toward the people and conflictive toward the elite. This dichotomy may be differentiated into three constituents of populist ideology. While Anti-Elitism is clearly conflictive toward the elite and People-centrism is advocative toward the people, the constituent of restoring sovereignty may be divided into an advocative and a conflictive aspect, as the power is taken from the elite and given to the people (see Figure 1).

In this chapter, the three constituents of populist ideology are used to develop measurement instruments for the assessment of populist communication and attitudes. Ultimately, we aim to provide two congruent three-dimensional constructs.

Figure 1: General concept of populist ideology.



Restoring sovereignty

The first of the central constituents of populist ideology used in this operationalization is the desire to achieve or restore unrestrained popular sovereignty. The sovereignty of the people is the central idea of populist ideology, as it forms the relationship among the people, the elite/others and the populist actor. Following this concept, the people should have total sovereignty, while the elites or the others are as seen as depriving them of this right. This is why the populist (whose success depends on being considered the sole true representative of the pure people) prefers to appear as the one protecting or restoring the people's sovereignty. The desire to restore sovereignty may be expressed by claims aiming to redistribute power in favor of the people and to the disadvantage of other powerful institutions and actors. Therefore, an advocative and a conflictive aspect are inherent to this dimension of restoring sovereignty.

To measure populist communication in this dimension, it is crucial to include both the advocative request for more power to the people and the conflictive denial of power to the current elite. The first communication strategy representing this position is *Claiming popular sovereignty*. Such a claim can be made either on an abstract and general level (such as the claim "for more power to the people") or concerning concrete institutions that ensure popular sovereignty, such as the claim to introduce or preserve direct democratic elements in the decision-making process of the political system. The second communication strategy is *Denying power to the elite*. The elite, in this respect, may be international and supranational organizations and their laws, the political or intellectual establishment, or courts for example. Anyone threatening the idea of an unrestricted sovereignty of the people should be bereft of power.

Conversely, with *Denying power to the people* and *Claiming elite sovereignty*, two anti-populist communication strategies (that populists will oppose), are included in this dimension. For communication patterns to be considered populist in the dimension of popular sovereignty, this pattern should consist of the approval of populist statements and rejection of anti-populist claims.

For measuring populist attitudes, this dimension may be captured by survey questions addressing the allocation of power in a democracy. Here, the degree to which the people should gain power at the expense of elites or the degree to which the country should gain power at the expense of supra- and international actors may be elicited directly. The degree to which the people are favored against the powerful elite may be taken as a measurement of popular sovereignty attitudes.

People-centrism

Based on the Manichean worldview inherent to populist ideology, which considers society to be separated into the two groups of "the pure and homogeneous people" and "the corrupt elite", people-centrist and anti-elitist notions may be derived from the definition of populism.

People centrism means that the populist claim for unrestricted popular sovereignty is closely connected to specific understandings and valorization of the people. First, to be able to speak on behalf of the people and their interests, populists necessarily regard the people as a monolithic entity. However, not all members of society are part of the people. Some groups that have separate interests are excluded from the people. This *exclusion of actors from the people* is the third communication strategy. Depending on how the people are defined (left-wing and right-wing populist will do so differently), the groups not considered part of the good people will vary – leading in one case to the exclusion of rich managers exploiting the capitalist system and in another to the exclusion of immigrants exploiting the national welfare system (cf. Abts & Rummens, 2007). Exclusion means that out-groups are defined as being outside the idealized vision of society – the romanticized 'heartland' in the populists' mind – where not everyone has a place.

Second, the populist always regards the in-group representing the pure people as being right, and this group is therefore presented in an unambiguously favorable light. Positive attributes of the people may be mentioned to flatter the voters and reassure them of the superb reputation they enjoy with the populist actor. Populists miss no opportunity to accentuate the goodness and superiority of the people. They do so by contending that only the people are good, pure and virtuous because they are guided by common sense.

Third, while it is important for all political actors to demonstrate closeness to certain societal groups and thereby win the trust and, ideally, the votes of the people, the closeness to the people as a whole is supremely important for populist actors. Only if the people are assured that an actor is one of their own kind will they entrust him with the mission to represent the people's will in the political system. In this context it becomes apparent that populist actors are confronted with a paradox: They reject the principle of political representation, but most of them serve as parliamentary representatives themselves (cf. Taggart, 2002, pp. 71–79). Their challenge is to be perceived as a legitimate member of the ordinary people and, simultaneously, as embodying the will of 'the' people. They therefore demonstrate closeness to the people regarding the people's values, lifestyles, needs and concerns and present themselves as acting in the name of the people, guided by common sense, defending and protecting the people's values. Moreover, while being one of the people (cf. Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2007, p. 7), populist actors are not part of the corrupt and treacherous elite but are able to defend the people from them. The leader, thus,

nourishes a relationship of trust, identification and loyalty with the public (cf. Panizza, 2005, pp. 18-21).

People-centrism is therefore concerned with the perception of a monolithic people, the definition of this people by means of inclusion and exclusion of groups, and a focus on positive attributes of the people. Furthermore, in populist communication, the self-presentation of populist actors as being part of the people may be considered people-centrist.

Because of the multi-faceted nature of people-centrism, a variety of people-centrist communication strategies may be defined. First, *stressing the virtues of the people* and *stressing the achievements of the people* are important advocative communication strategies concerning the positive image of the people. In addition to these strategies, treating the people as a discrete entity with common feelings, common desires and a common will by explicitly *Stating a monolithic people* is a populist communication strategy. It stands in direct contrast to treating the people as a pluralist entity with many different opinions and desires; to the need for competing parties; and to the need to acknowledge the value of consensus after deliberative, balanced consideration of pros and cons in an open and rational debate. In addition, the advocative communication strategy of *including someone in the people* and the conflictive counterpart of *excluding someone from the people* are communication strategies directly representing people-centrism. In the self-presentation of political actors, *demonstrating closeness to the people* may also be counted as a people-centrist communication strategy.

Conversely, acknowledging a pluralist people by either explicitly denying a monolithic people or taking minorities into account, as well as stressing negative attributes of the people or communicating a large distance between the people and oneself, may be considered anti-populist communication strategies. Again, populist communication strategies have to outweigh anti-populist ones to classify a position as people-centrist.

With regard to populist attitudes, the measurement should combine the attitude toward the people and the perception of a monolithic versus a pluralist people. Taken together, these measurements may be used to quantify the people-centrist attitudes of individuals. If the individuals are politicians, the distance between the people and the respondent should also be taken into account to mirror the communication strategy of demonstrating closeness to the people.

Anti-elitism

As with people-centrism, anti-elitism follows the Manichean worldview of populism, in which the elites constitute the evil counterpart to the people. Consequently, anti-elitism is likewise central to populist communication as is people-centrism. Central to the anti-elitist ideology is a negative image of and the focus on the negative attributes of the elite. In addition, the elite are blamed for

negative developments and harmful situations and deemed incapable of solving such problems. Depending on the political ideology of the populist actor, the elite to be blamed differ slightly. In right-wing populism, the elite to be challenged are often supranational institutions, foreign governments, and parts of the national government fraternizing with any of them. In left-wing populism, by contrast, the elite are the wealthy and influential economic elite, including corporations and wealthy members of the government or parliament. If the government as a whole is considered either too close to supranational institutions (right-wing) or to economic actors (left-wing) by the populist actor, blame shifting may also be a goal. In the Manichean populist worldview, the political elite are not part of the people, which also means that they do not share the people's values (Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2004; Taggart, 2000).

Three different communication strategies can be differentiated in relation to anti-elitism. First, the elites can be criticized for general incompetence, responsibility for bad developments in society or corruption. This conflictive strategy is called *Blame shifting* and refers to any speech act holding a specific actor responsible or accountable for (or incapable of resolving) an undesirable or harmful situation. Second, the elite can be portrayed as being corrupt, evil, or incapable by applying the conflictive strategy of *Discrediting the elite*. Here, negative personality traits, mistakes, and unlawful or immoral behavior are stressed. The explicit discrediting or rejection of opponents is generally considered bad style in political communication and labeled 'mud slinging' or 'schlammschlacht'. However, this strategy of political communication is important to populist communication, as the elite and the out-group do not merely have to be excluded from the people but also to be perceived as the enemy. Third, a large distance may be said to exist between the people and the elite. This strategy of excluding the elite from the people is a special case of the exclusion of persons or groups from the people, which is considered a people-centrist communication strategy. In people-centrism, however, the inclusion or exclusion of the elite is irrelevant, as the strategy focuses on groups within the population rather than on the elite.

Again, each of these strategies may be countered by an anti-populist strategy holding the opposite position. Stressing the virtues and achievements of the elite and stating a low distance between the elite and the people should be considered in this respect.

To capture anti-elitist attitudes, both the negative image of the elite and the perceived responsibility of the elite for current problems and negative developments should be assessed.

Parallel measurement of communication and attitude

Using the generalized concept of populist ideology proposed in this working paper, specific measurement instruments may be devised for a multi-dimensional and coherent assessment of populist communication and attitudes. Such a possibility of equivalently measuring populist

communication and attitudes is the primary requirement for the proposal of an integrative framework for populism research. Unless these instruments measure populism in the same way and using the same dimensions, data from different sources (i.e., surveys, interviews, and content analyses) may not be combined to study the flow and effects of populist communication.

The operationalization exemplified in this chapter also shows that the generalized concept of populism does not only allow for the operationalization of populism but also for the definition of communication strategies and attitudes contradictory to populist ideology. Taking into account indicators for both populist ideology and its absence, a fine-grained measurement may be devised.

Table 1: Parallel measurement of populist communication and attitude

		Communication	Attitude
Conflictive	Anti-Elitism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrediting the Elite • Blaming the Elite • Excluding the Elite from the People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative Attitude toward the Elite • Blaming the Elite
	Restoring Sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denying Power to the Elite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire for More Power for the People at the Expense of the Elite
Advocative		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demanding Power for the People 	
	People-Centrism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stressing Virtues of the People • Praising Achievements of the People • Stating a Monolithic People • Demonstrating Closeness to the People 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Attitude toward the People • Perception of a Homogeneous / Monolithic People

Chapter 8: Conclusion and Outlook

In this working paper, we proposed an integrative research paradigm for the quantitative measurement and empirical investigation of populism as a phenomenon in politics, media, and the public. While the measurement of populist communication and attitudes is deductively derived from a minimal definition of populism as a thin ideology, the reliability and validity of this measurement has yet to be established. In addition, the extent to which politicians employ populist communication, the degree to which media transmit, criticize, deconstruct or enforce populism, and the strength of populist attitudes in the public remain to be tested. In closing, we offer an overview of the necessary steps necessary to refine and test the above-presented framework.

Measurement reliability

First, the reliability of the suggested measurement of populist communication and attitudes has to be tested to apply it in populism research. In a first step, the consistency of measurement and the reliability of applied scales need to be checked. For populist attitudes, this may be achieved with public opinion surveys in which the three dimensions of populist attitudes and their internal reliability, as well as their covariance, are tested. For the measurement of populist communication, content analyses of communication artifacts from a wide variety of political actors and media outlets are required to verify the reliability of the measures and their applicability to different modes of political communication.

Second, as the framework is devised both for longitudinal and cross-cultural research, measurement invariance across countries and time periods is required. The framework may only be applied to cross-cultural research if the measurement is equally reliable in different media cultures and political systems.

Validity of the measurement

In terms of measurement validity, the framework requires confirmation that the outcome is actually a valid measurement of populism. A straightforward and important way of establishing construct validity is to investigate and compare political actors who are frequently considered populist, pluralist, or elitist. Only if the measurement is able to differentiate between these actors by displaying clear group differences can it be considered valid.

In addition to construct validity, the discriminative validity of our constructs has to be tested. This can be achieved by measuring populism in relation to highly similar and highly dissimilar concepts such as extremism/radicalism, elitism, or pluralism. It is necessary that the scores for populism be positively related to similar constructs and negatively related to conflicting concepts.

Furthermore, the alignment of populism with ideologies on the political left and political right needs to be established to identify different varieties of thick populist ideologies.

Research perspectives

Once the reliability and validity of the framework are established, tremendous research possibilities may be exploited to answer key questions related to the understudied area of populist political communication. These questions include, but are not limited to the following.

The flow of populism: What effects do populist messages – communicated through the news media or other channels – have on voter attitudes? To what extent does populist public opinion shape the way in which political actors present themselves? How successful is populist communication in setting the media agenda?

The history of populism: Under what conditions does populism increase or decrease in the history of a country? What are favorable contextual conditions for the success of populist political actors? What are the long-term evolutionary patterns of populist political communication? How has populist communication changed in recent decades?

The role of news media: To what degree do different media outlets transmit, deconstruct, or amplify populist messages? What strategies do news media employ to increase or decrease the amount of populism in their political affairs coverage? What type of populist communication originates internally in media newsrooms as opposed to populist communication received externally from political actors?

The style of populism: What styles of presentation are frequently associated with populist communication? To what degree do the public and journalists mistake these styles for actual populist communication? Are there different styles and communication patterns across countries and different populist actors?

Using the framework outlined in this paper and applying it to extensive cross-cultural and longitudinal research designs for political communication and attitudes, most of these questions can be answered in due time. The first step in this direction is currently being pursued by the members of Module II ("The appeal of populist...") of the NCCR Democracy. We welcome opportunities to collaborate with other research teams in the joint effort of gaining a better understanding of populist communication in an era of numerous political challenges.

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