



## **The media as secret helpers?**

- Analysing the mass media's handling of populist party communication during the 2014 EP election campaign

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# Research Questions

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## Visibility in the media...

- enhances recognition and legitimacy (e.g. Ellinas 2010)
- helps mobilizing voter support (e.g. Koopmans & Muis 2009)

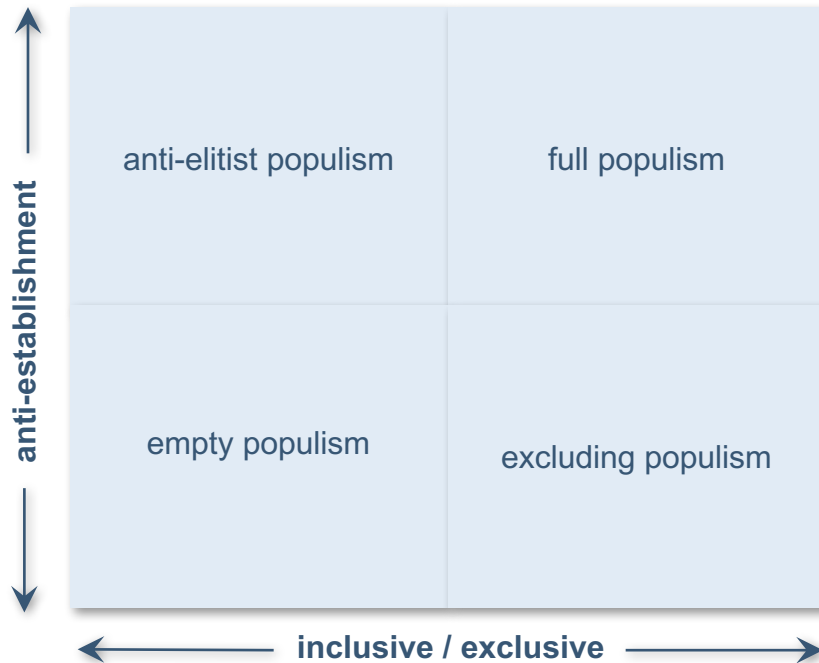
- > Did populist party communication have an influence on a party's visibility in the print media during the 2014 EP elections?

Are anti-immigrant types of populist party communication – i.e. excluding and nationalist populism – particularly successful in enhancing a party's visibility in the print media?

# Definition

## > Populism as a political **communication style**

(Jagers & Walgrave 2007)



## > 3 components:

- alleged proximity to and identification with the population  
*appeal to the people*
- criticism of and distrust in the (political) elites  
*elite-critique*
- ostracism of 'the others'  
*exclusion*

# Populism and Media Logic

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- > Journalists act as gatekeepers
    - base their selection on **news factors** to which they assign a certain news value  
(Galtung & Ruge 1965, Østgaard 1965)
  
  - > News factors
    - **characteristics of news stories** that contribute to making them newsworthy  
(e.g. Kepplinger 2008)
  
  - > Populism is said to be of high news value  
(e.g. Plasser & Ulram 2003, Mazzoleni 2003)
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# News Value of Populist Communication

ELEMENT OF POPULISM	NEWS FACTORS (e.g. Schulz 1976; Staab 1990)	DIMENSION		
people reference	cultural proximity ethnocentrism	<i>proximity</i> <i>identification</i>	}	<i>anti-elitist populism</i>
elite critique	personal influence conflict / controversy potential damage actual damage (crime)	<i>status</i> <i>valence (negativity)</i>		
exclusion	conflict / controversy potential damage actual damage crime ethnocentrism	<i>valence (negativity)</i>  <i>identification</i>	}	<i>full populism</i> (populism with exclusive element)

# Assumption

## *General Populism*

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- > The more news factors a story satisfies, the higher the probability that it will be selected for publication.

(Galtung & Ruge 1965)

- > Populist messages carry a lot of news factors
  - they attract attention within the process of journalistic selection and so do the parties that are communicating in this way!

**H1:** A party is expected to become more visible in the news media the more often it applies a populist communication style.

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# Assumption

## *Excluding Populism*

- > The more news factors a story satisfies, the higher the probability that it will be selected for publication (**additivity hypothesis**).

(Galtung & Ruge 1965)

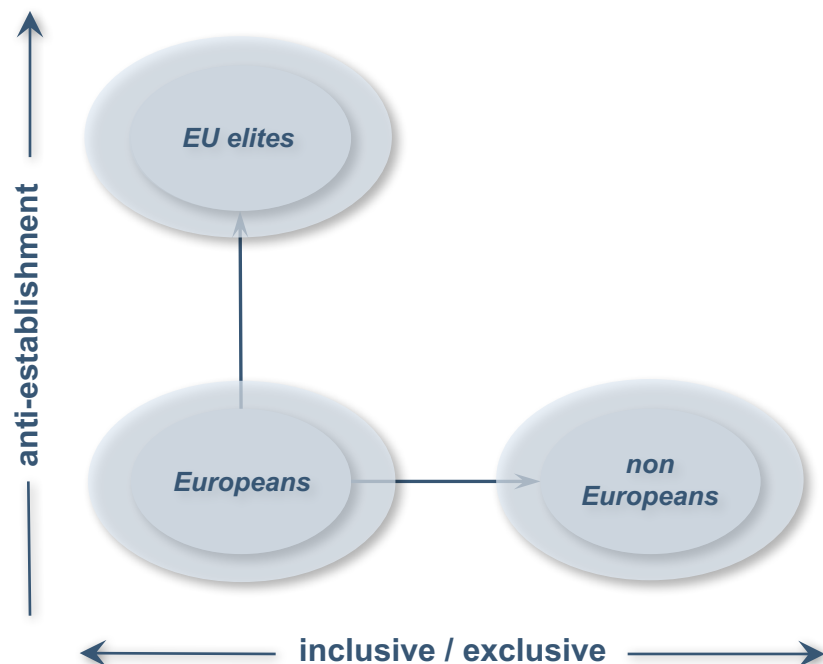
**H2:** A party is expected to become more visible in the news media if it applies a full populist communication style (i.e. with an exclusive element) rather than if it applies a populist communication style that is 'only' anti-elitist.

# European Context

Q03: Do you see yourself as...

Country	(nationality) only	(nationality) and European	European and (nationality)	European only	total 'European'
DE	27%	59%	10%	2%	71%
AT	33%	55%	8%	2%	65%
FR	34%	57%	6%	1%	64%
GR	49%	47%	3%	2%	51%

Source: Standard-Eurobarometer 81 – European Citizenship– Spring 2014



- > horizontal dimension: question of **identity perception**
- > identities can be multi-layered (e.g. Hermann & Brewer 2004)
- > most of the people hold **national identities**



# Assumption

## *Nationalist Populism*

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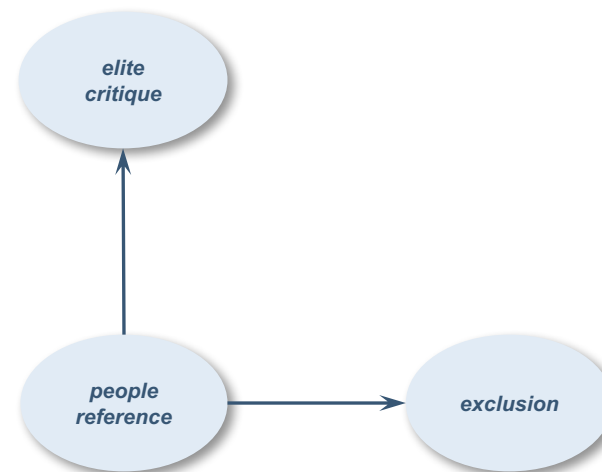
- > national appeals reach **large numbers** of people  
(e.g. Eurobarometer 2014)
  - > national appeals tap feelings of **solidarity** and **identification**  
(e.g. Tarrow 1998)
    - ‘cultural proximity’ and ‘ethnocentrism’ are news factors with higher news value, if they involve *national* identification
- H3:** A party is expected to become more visible in the news media if applies national populism than if it applies populist communication that refers to the community of Europeans.
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# Procedure

## *Party Communication*

Austria, Germany, France, Greece

- > quantitative content analysis of press releases
  - all political parties that reached more than 3% in the last elections
  - Europ\* / europ\* / EU and relevant acronyms (2x)
  - 12 weeks prior to the 2014 EP elections
  
- > 1 Greek, 3 German, 2 French coders
  
- > **3 populism variables**
  - indices for degree, type and level of populism for each of the 27 parties



Krippendorff's $\alpha$	German	French	Greek
peopref	0.91	0.85	0.93
antiestab	0.76	0.76	0.73
exclusion	0.64	0.84	0.87

# Procedure

## Media Visibility

Austria, Germany, France, Greece

- > quantitative content analysis of quality newspapers
  - 12 weeks prior to the 2014 EP elections
  - 1 right- and 1 left-leaning newspaper per country
  - EU-related political news articles
  - coded up to three political actors per article that were expressing a political opinion



- > 3 Greek, 8 German, 4 French coders
- > 'Visibility'
  - party (exponent) expresses a political opinion within a news article at least *once*

Krippendorff's $\alpha$	German	French	Greek
political actor 1	0.73	0.62	0.78
political actor 2	0.73	0.92	0.82
political actor 3	0.62	0.83	0.58

# Procedure

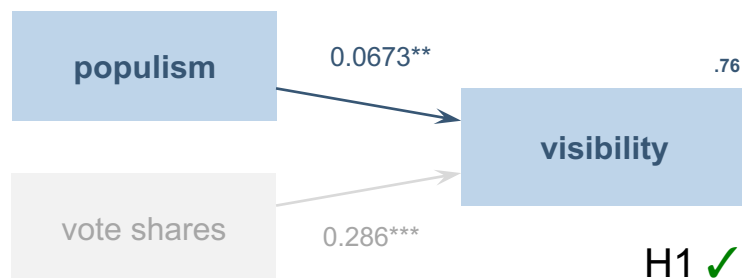
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- > linear OLS regressions
    - percentage of a party's populist communication in press releases on its visibility in newspaper
  
  - > controlled for number of vote shares
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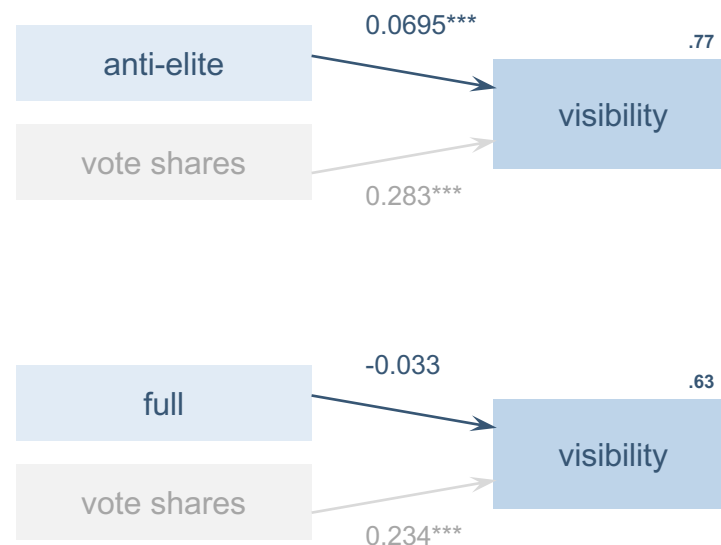
# Results I

Type of Populism

Dependent Variable



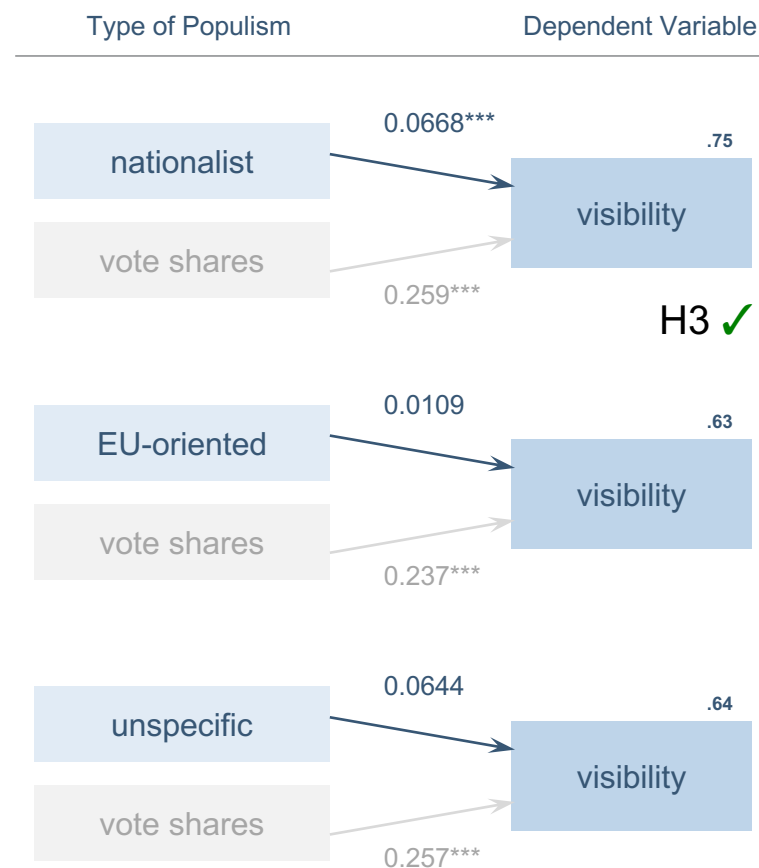
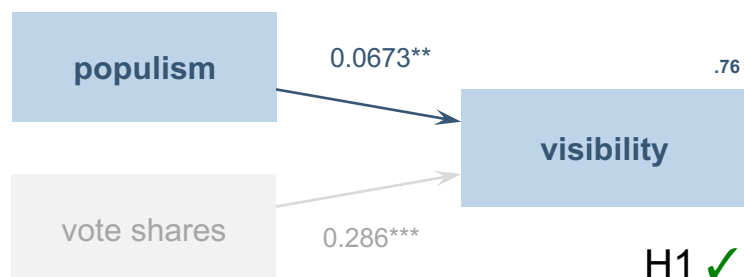
H1 ✓



H2 ✗

N=27 parties; linear OLS regressions: numbers besides arrows indicate non-standardized regression coefficients; numbers near boxes indicate explained variances; all regressions have high values for VIF (<2.0), indicating that severe multicollinearity effects are not present; \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

# Results II



N=27 parties; linear OLS regressions: numbers besides arrows indicate non-standardized regression coefficients; numbers near boxes indicate explained variances; all regressions have high values for VIF (<2.0), indicating that severe multicollinearity effects are not present; \* p<0.05; \*\* p<0.01; \*\*\* p<0.001

## Conclusion and Outlook

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- > Were the media 'secret helpers' of the populists, because they granted them media attention as a result of their populist party communication?
  
  - > Journalists do not only take into account the news factors of a message
    - Political parallelism? Mediasystems?
    - Mediatype?
    - Country-differences?
  
  - > Is visibility alone sufficient?
  
  - > Apart from a party's visibility in the news: are their actual populist messages reflected by the media too?
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Thank you!

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