Populist Communication
In the Context of the European Parliament Elections 2014

Franzisca Schmidt
18. November 2014
Research question

> What different types of populist communication styles emerge during the EP election campaign 2014
  
  – and under which conditions are populist communication styles selected by political parties?
“Populism is conceived of as a political style essentially displaying proximity of the people, while at the same time taking an anti-establishment stance and stressing the (ideal) homogeneity of the people by excluding specific population segments”

(Jagers & Walgrave 2007: 319)

> 3 components:

— alleged proximity to and identification with the population

\textit{appeal to the people, homogeneity}

— criticism of and distrust in the (political) elites

\textit{elite-critique}

— ostracism of ‘the others’

\textit{exclusion}
Types of populism
Jagers & Walgrave (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thin populism:</th>
<th>(1) people reference</th>
<th>empty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Medium 1” populism:</td>
<td>(1) people reference and (2) elite critique</td>
<td>anti-elitist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Medium 2” populism:</td>
<td>(1) people reference and (3) exclusion</td>
<td>excluding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thick populism:</td>
<td>(1) people reference and (2) elite critique and (3) exclusion</td>
<td>complete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All constitutive traits of populism are considered as features of a political style rather than being bound to a distinct ideology (Jagers & Walgrave 2007).

Populism is conceived as the property of a message rather than the property of the actor sending the message (Roodujin et al. 2012).
Theory

Populism and Euroscepticism

> general assumption: Euroscepticism provides a particularly favourable environment for populism

> process of (European) integration:
  — allocation of competences
  — enlargement, membership

> activated issues within Es. discourse:
  — democratic deficit of the EU
  — distance EU elite – citizens; bureaucracy of EU institutions
  — EU accession negotiations, free movement of persons

> Harmsen (2010): Euroscepticism is not a subset of populism
**Theory**

*The inverted U-curve*

Positioning on selected EU Policies, by Left/Right dimension, all parties in 1999 (N = 125)
Source: Hooghe et al. (2002)

Left-right ideologie and EU position in 1999 (EU 15)
Assumption

> H0: Parties settled either on the right or left pole of the traditional political spectrum use more populist communication styles than mainstream parties.
Procedure

- Germany & Austria
- quantitative content analysis of press releases
  - all political parties that reached more than 3% in the last national or European elections (and are running again for EP elections 2014)
  - Europ* europ* EU (2x)
  - 8 weeks prior to the EP elections 2014
Results

Percentage of ‘people reference’ in a PR per party

**Austria**

- Grüne
- SPÖ
- ÖVP
- NEOS
- BZÖ
- FPÖ

χ²(5, N=689) = 21.88; p < 0.001
Cramér's V: 0.18

**Germany**

- die Linke
- Grüne
- SPD
- CDU/CSU
- FDP
- AfD

χ²(5, N=213) = 3.13; p not significant
Cramér's V: 0.12
Results

Percentage of ‘people reference’ in a PR per party

**Austria**

- Grüne: thin populism
- SPÖ: medium/thick populism
- ÖVP: thin populism
- NEOS: medium/thick populism
- BZÖ: thin populism
- FPÖ: medium/thick populism

χ²(10, N=212) = 35.85; p < 0.001
Cramér's V: 0.29

**Germany**

- die Linke: thin populism
- Grüne: medium/thick populism
- SPD: thin populism
- CDU/CSU: medium/thick populism
- FDP: thin populism
- AfD: medium/thick populism

χ²(10, N=689) = 80.65; p < 0.001
Cramér's V: 0.24
# Theory

## Forms of Euroscepticism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eurosceptic Left</th>
<th>Eurosceptic Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **political dimension** | • political critique of the EU’s democratic deficit  
• criticism is directed to political elites |
| **economic dimension** | • socio-economic criticism of the EU’s neo-liberalism  
• criticism is directed to economic elites |
| **cultural dimension** | • opposition to  
• (more) immigration  
• free movement of persons  
• prospective enlargement to the East  
• demand for stricter European border controls |

(e.g. Bartolini 2005; Heine 2010; Hooghe et al. 2002; Reunogat 2010; Scharpf 1996, 1999) (e.g. Betz 1994; Börzel & Risse 2000; Hooghe et al. 2002; Kitschelt 1995; Risse-Kappen 1996; Taggart 1998)
Assumptions

> H1a: In the populist communication of left-wing eurosceptic parties the element of 'exclusion' is neglected and a 'medium 1' (or 'thin') type of populism is predominant.

> H1b: In the populist communication of right-wing eurosceptic parties the element of 'exclusion' is overbalanced and they are therefore applying a 'medium 2' or a 'thick' type of populism.
Results

quantity of populism type per party

\[ \chi^2(10, N=64) = 41.17; \ p < 0.001 \]

Cramér's V: 0.57

\[ \chi^2(10, N=260) = 88.89; \ p < 0.001 \]

Cramér's V: 0.41
> transnational nature of the EU
> multi-level governance
> horizontal dimension: question of identity

> What identity perception do the political parties represent?
> How does this identity perception influence populist party communication?
### Theory

**Identity**

Q03: Do you see yourself as...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land</th>
<th>(NATIONALITY) only</th>
<th>(NATIONALITY) and European</th>
<th>European and (NATIONALITY)</th>
<th>European only</th>
<th>Total 'European'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DE</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- **exclusive national identity**
- **inclusive European identity**
- right-wing Eurosceptics
- mainstream parties
- left-wing Eurosceptics: „pro-European communitarian“ (Heine 2010)
Assumptions

> H2a: Eurosceptic parties from the right address their people reference to their own nation.

> H2b: Mainstream parties and Eurosceptic parties from the left rather appeal to the citizens of the EU.
Results

direction of ‘people reference’ per party

\[ \chi^2(10, N=260) = 46.32; \ p < 0.001 \]
Cramér's V: 0.30

\[ \chi^2(10, N=64) = 9.48; \ p \text{ not significant} \]
Cramér's V: 0.27
Conclusion

> Eurosceptic fringe parties do not use populist communication more often than mainstream parties, but there is a tendency to use more medium or thick populism than mainstream parties

> Left-wing parties:  
  *anti-elitist populism* & thin populism

> Right-wing parties:  
  *anti-elitist populism* & excluding populism

> Parties that represent an inclusive European identity are more often appealing to the *community of Europeans* than to the people of the national state  
  — (exceptions: ÖVP, CDU/CSU)

> Parties that represent an exclusive national identity are more often appealing to the *people of the national state* than to the people of Europe.
Thank you!