Populist Communication
In the Context of the European Parliament Elections 2014

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January 2015
Research questions

> What different types of populist communication styles emerged during the EP election campaign 2014
  – and under which conditions are populist communication styles selected by political parties?

> Is a populist communication style a successful strategy to attain presence in the print media?
  – and if yes, under what conditions?

> In what way is this populist party communication handled by the different kinds of print media?
Germany, Austria, Greece

8 weeks prior to the EP elections

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)
Definition

*Populism*

> “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

*appeal to the people, homogeneity*

— criticism of and distrust in the (political) elites

*elite-critique*

— ostracism of 'the others' 

*exclusion*
Types of populism
Jagers & Walgrave (2007)

| Thin populism: | (1) people reference | empty |
| Medium 1” populism: | (1) people reference and (2) elite critique | anti-elitist |
| Medium 2” populism: | (1) people reference and (3) exclusion | excluding |
| Thick populism: | (1) people reference and (2) elite critique and (3) exclusion | complete |

> 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.
Results

\[ H_0 \]

\[ N = 689; V = 0.17; p < 0.010 \]
Results

H0

N = 689; V = 0.24; p < 0.001
Results

$H_0$

$N = 212; V = 0.28; p < 0.001$
Results

$H_0$

$N = 212; V = 0.28; p < 0.001$

[Bar chart showing percentage of medium/thick populism and thin populism across left-wing, center, and right-wing parties in Germany.]
Results

$H_0$

N = 330; V = 0.37; p < 0.001
Results

$H_0$

$N = 330; V = 0.37; p < 0.001$

Greece

- medium/thick populism
- thin populism

% Percent

KKE | SYRIZA | DIMAR | PASOK | ND | ANEL | XA

left-wing | center | right-wing
## 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; Reungoat 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

H1

N = 264; V = 0.40; p < 0.001
Results

H1

Austria

% Percent

Grüne | SPÖ | ÖVP | NEOS | BZÖ | FPÖ

thin  | medium 1 | medium 2 & thick

center

right-wing

N = 264; V = 0.40; p < 0.001
Results

$H1$

$N = 64; V = 0.55; p < 0.001$
Results

H1

N = 64; V = 0.55; p < 0.001
Results

H1

N = 228; V = 0.43; p < 0.001
Results

H1

N = 228; V = 0.43; p < 0.001
> transnational nature of the EU
> multi-level governance
> *question of identity*

> What identity perception do the political parties represent?
> How does this identity perception influence populist party communication?
**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>
<tr>
<td>EL</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>51%</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

H2

Austria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Unsprec.</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>EU</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grüne</td>
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<td>SPÖ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

N = 264; V = 0.28; p < 0.001
Results

H2

N = 64; V = 0.27; p < 0.010
Results

$H2$

$N = 228; V = 0.30; p < 0.010$
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

> 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
  — (exception I: all Greek parties have a strong national focus)
  — (exception II: conservative mainstream parties)

> 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!