

Key Note Speakers

Natalia Roudakova: Populism and Post-Truth: A Relationship

Natalia Roudakova is a cultural anthropologist (Ph.D., Stanford University, 2007) working in the field of political communication and comparative media studies, with a broad interest in moral philosophy and political and cultural theory. She has worked as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication, University of California in San Diego, and most recently as a visiting scholar in the Media and Communication Department at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. In 2013-2014, Roudakova was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, California, where she completed her book manuscript titled *Losing Pravda: Ethics and the Press in Post-Truth Russia* which is now out with Cambridge University Press.

Michael Schudson: Democracy, Desperation, and Distraction: Notes on Populism Today

Michael Schudson grew up in Milwaukee, Wisc. He received a B.A. from Swarthmore College and M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from Harvard. He taught at the University of Chicago from 1976 to 1980 and at the University of California, San Diego from 1980 to 2009. From 2005 on, he split his teaching between UCSD and the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, becoming a full-time member of the Columbia faculty in 2009. He is the author of seven books and co-editor of three others concerning the history and sociology of the American news media, advertising, popular culture, Watergate and cultural memory. He is the recipient of a number of honors; he has been a Guggenheim fellow, a resident fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, and a MacArthur Foundation "genius" fellow. His most recent books are *The Rise of the Right to Know: Politics and the Culture of Transparency 1945-1975* (Harvard, 2015) and (with C.W. Anderson and Leonard Downie, Jr.), *The News Media: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford, 2016). In 2004, he received the Murray Edelman distinguished career award from the political communication section of the American Political Science Association and the International Communication Association.

Breaking the News: When Populists Turn Against the Media: The Israel Case

Ayala Panievsky

Molad-The Centre of the Renewal of Israeli Democracy

ayalapan@gmail.com

Over the last few years, democracies around the world have seen the rise of a political culture which could be defined as "anti-media populism". A growing number of politicians – particularly on the right – conduct a public crusade against the media, aimed at discrediting and demonising journalists, news organisations and the press as a democratic institution. Polls and experiment-based research suggest that these campaigns effectively erode the public trust in the media. Thus, anti-media populism poses a tangible peril to journalism, and hence, to democracy itself.

To be sure, politicians have always complained about their news coverage. The contemporary wave of 'fake news' accusations, however, is more than a catchphrase delivered by politicians who are dissatisfied with their media representation. Taking advantage of social media, present-day populists – such as Donald Trump, Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders and Benjamin Netanyahu – introduce an intentional and consistent attempt to undermine mass media as a common source of knowledge about the world.

But why doesn't the media – an indisputably powerful actor – simply defend itself from the populist assault? Restrained by the poor financial state of the media industry, as well as the intense competition with social media, reporters are forced to cover anti-media populists extensively. The latter artfully exploit the media's obsession with ratings and traffic, using outrageous provocations to grant themselves free-of-charge airtime. Thus, journalists find themselves compelled to play into the hands of those who seek to discredit them.

Paradoxically, it is journalistic objectivity itself that renders reporters so vulnerable to anti-media populism. I will argue that within the present context, the occupational ideology of journalists – particularly their interpretation of impartiality, objectivity and balance – leads them to promote their new, dangerous adversaries. The adherence to 'neutrality' and the habit of separating themselves from their stories limit journalists' ability to defend their profession. Populists utilise this 'neutrality' to gain visibility – and then use the exposure to condemn the media as biased.

This paper explores the coping strategies of journalists under attack. It focuses on the case study of the relationship between the Israeli media and the Israeli PM, Benjamin Netanyahu, a paradigmatic anti-media populist. Drawing on dozens of in-depth interviews with leading Israeli reporters, editors and commentators, I will address questions such as: How do journalists cover populist attacks aimed at them, their colleagues and their profession? What strategies do they develop in the face of anti-media populism? Which structural conditions enable them to fight back, or prevent them from doing so? What role does social media and its logic play in the interplay between anti-press populists and journalists?

Journalists' current attempts to establish alternative guidelines for covering populism initiate a rare discussion, which is likely to determine the shape of journalism in the years to come. I contend that academics – and particularly media scholars – should contribute to the debate.

It's the EU immigrants stupid! UKIP's core-issue and populist rhetoric on the road to Brexit

Ceri Hughes

University of Wisconsin-Madison

ceri.hughes@wisc.edu

The 2016 vote to leave the European Union was one of the biggest developments in recent United Kingdom political history; only one political party was wholly united for Brexit – the United Kingdom Independence Party. This research finds that in the years leading up to Brexit, UKIP presented themselves as a rigid core-issue complete-populist party. Content analysis using natural language processing software was undertaken on 2,390 party news releases and 43,000 extracts of newspaper stories related to the party from 2009 to 2016. This analysis shows how pervasive the EU was in much of party output and in contemporaneous newspaper coverage of the party. The party used words related to the European Union about as frequently as they used language related to all other major policy areas combined; illustrating their core-issue focus – a focus which is generally reflected in newspaper coverage of the party.

Stanyer et al. (2017) argue that UKIP conform to Jagers and Walgrave's (2007) typology as "complete populists". Complete populist parties are argued to make appeals across three broad areas: appeals to ordinary people; anti-elite appeals and "othering" – language intended to demarcate between in-group and out-groups. This research finds that UKIP utilize all three tropes from the populist playbook, but language related to othering is by far the most common, with its usage also increasing over time while the levels of other populist appeals are static.

A comparison of election and non-election periods shows that UKIP's populist messaging increased during election periods while the rate of words connected to policy areas (excluding the EU) decreased – this is consistent with the generally emotive rather than considered tone of populist appeals.

Collocation analysis is undertaken to assess how closely the party, and newspaper coverage of the party, locate populist messaging alongside anti-EU messaging and policy language. The most interesting finding here is that the Express group of newspapers (owned by UKIP donor Richard Desmond) use populist language when covering the party at a much higher rate than other newspapers and the changes over time almost mirror the levels in UKIP news releases. Further, it is the Express more than any newspaper group which collocates populist language with EU language when covering the party.

It is widely acknowledged how much of fourth estate copy now originates from the fifth estate of PR (Lewis et al. 2008). However, it was previously understood that only political elites held sufficient power to enable their information to pass the media gatekeepers and set agenda. UKIP were afforded issue-elite status, enabling their message to embed in the communication ecology. The impact of this is unclear, yet in the 2016 referendum over half the population voted against the major party's positions. They voted with UKIP.

UKIP are a core-issue complete-populist party, a position which enabled them to become an issue-force with political power exceeding what they should have been able to wield. This provides a potential (concerning) blueprint for other issue parties to follow – under what conditions this may occur requires greater understanding.

Journalists in Hong Kong Report on Populist Discourses

Florin C. Serban

Hong Kong Baptist University

florinserban@hkbu.edu.hk

Hong Kong recently celebrated its 20th anniversary since the return to mainland China. It was an event marked with festivities, but also with concerns among its citizens and its journalists. The special administrative region holds a unique position among all the postcolonial regions in the world, regarded as the freest economy, but orbiting around mainland China, a country dominated by a single party rule.

In recent years, the territory has witnessed a rise in political formations asking for the independence of Hong Kong. Dubbed as 'localist' groups, these political formations aim to counter China's growing influence in the territory. On the other hand, the pro-Beijing parties in Hong Kong have a long-standing view that the territory's present and future is a Chinese one (Mazzoleni, 2008). The pro-Beijing camp is reinforcing its message that an independence perspective should not even be considered (Lam, 2018). In this climate, populism has fostered on both sides, creating a polarized discourse (Cooper and Lam, 2018) and making it very difficult for journalists to perform their professional roles.

This empirical study investigates the journalistic response to the rise of political populism in Hong Kong. Relying on 12 in-depth interviews with reporters and editors working for both legacy and digital-only media, the paper aims to illustrate the journalistic decision-making process on dealing with populist discourses and the editorial strategies to dodge such discourses, without ignoring the politicians per se. The study points out that while legacy media journalists prefer to balance their reporting with a large amount of context, digital-only journalists favour to report populist discourses without further interventions in order to avoid additional associations between the political discourse and their publication. As well, legacy journalists negotiate the length of political opinions that can be covered in their publications and try to match these with similar discourses - in tone and style - coming from the opposition camp. On the other hand, digital-only journalists tend to cover populist discourses on a first-come, first-served basis.

Reporting on populist discourses has negative effects in the relationship of journalists with their audiences as the former are constantly accused of disadvantaging the oppositional side. Journalists find it unprofessionally to cover such discourses and highlight that regardless of the professional standards they aim for, they cannot perform their normative roles in the political discourse.

The Rationalization of Populist Anti-intellectualism: Journalism's Contribution

Michael McDevitt

University of Colorado

mike.mcdevitt@colorado.edu

Anti-intellectualism operates in journalism ideology something like dark matter, a presence rarely subject to reflexivity, but a disposition inferred in how public mood is conveyed in the news. Journalism's complicity in giving voice to populist anti-intellectualism lingers as an elusive topic of scholarship. Antipathy toward intellect is tangled up with journalism's egalitarian ethos: its identification with "the public," ambivalence toward experts, and satisfaction in holding up the haughty and the highbrow to ridicule. Populist anti-intellectualism consequently persists as a hypothetical construct in journalism studies and an unrecognized force in journalism as an interpretive community.

The premise that journalism is vulnerable to reactionary incursions must overcome the objection that news simply conveys this cultural sentiment. A zeitgeist of global backlash to elected governments has awakened scholars to the specter of populism, suggesting a crisis of democracy that transcends mass media. This essay explores the complicity of US journalism in particular in condoning contempt for intellect, i.e. that part of reasoning with the autonomy to question orthodoxy and unsettle core beliefs. I will explicate how a punitive populism is rationalized in role identities, work routines, and enduring values of the news. The essay supports three, interrelated claims:

Anti-elitism resonates at deep levels of professional conviction. The American sociologist Herbert Gans argued that journalism should be understood as a "paraideology" to distinguish an assemblage of partially thought-out values from an integrated set of values typically defined as ideology. He documented eight values that underscore a vision of the good society. Among these, small-town pastoralism, ethnocentrism, moderatism, and respect for social order readily play into a narrative of the people aligned against elites.

Populism is justified in the ways that journalists imagine audiences. When journalists anticipate a restive public, the reified resentment is no more real than the fiction of omnipotent citizens in democratic theory. The demos is depicted as holding elites accountable, and journalism's complicity remains muddled in its affirmation of an agitated public. I will discuss how imagined audiences in the rise of Donald Trump might apply to media systems in other Western democracies.

Anti-intellectualism as a problem native to journalism is resistant to reflexivity. Reporters and editors increasingly criticize their work in digital media, signifying a shift from objectivity to transparency in the discourse of legitimation. Resentment and suspicion of intellect, however, are rarely up for discussion in newsrooms and classrooms where the profession is taught. Doxic news values and imagined audiences help to explain why transparency is itself subject to boundaries for the types of critiques that become salient in populist climates.

The paper concludes with a call for reform of professional education. I summarize recent survey research showing that support for anti-intellectualism is condoned in the views of emerging adults as they develop attitudes toward news, audiences and authority. Students in democratic cultures are often drawn to journalism because of its populist mythos. Educators should emphasize a critical autonomy that makes room for transparency but does not succumb to climates of opinion.

Populism by and through the media in Poland

Agnieszka Stępińska

Adam Mickiewicz University

Agnieszka.stepinska@amu.edu.pl

The aim of the paper is to present the findings of the quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the media coverage of populism and populist actors in Poland. The paper addresses following research questions: (1) Which political actors are perceived by Polish journalists as populist? (2) How much attention the media paid to these political actors during the election and a non-election period? (3) What was a tone of the media coverage (positive, neutral, or negative) of these actors? (4) What are the journalists' attitudes towards populism? (5) What factors may explain Polish journalists' attitudes towards populism

While studying the media coverage of the populist actors, I will employ a concept of the media populism. The term media populism lends itself to three perspectives: populism by the media, populism through the media, and populist citizen journalism (Esser, Stępińska, and Hopmann, 2017). Populism by the media refers to media organizations actively engaging in their own kind of populism, while populism through the media occurs when the media report on the political actors' slogans, arguments, and ideological perspectives.

The former may be an outcome of journalistic ideology that states that journalists should act as independent controllers of the elites in power (watchdog role) and serve the society by representing citizens' needs and demands (civic role) [Mellado, 2015], or an indicator of the „sweeping popularization” of news coverage due to highly commercialized media production that yields to general popular tastes (Mazzoleni, 2008: 50-51). The latter assumes that congruence between media logic and political populism is stylistic but not ideological: the media may be more likely to be receptive to populist rhetoric due to its high news value, than to be actively engaged in populism themselves. Hence the media support can exist even without conscious intention.

In the media systems with a high level of political pluralism, journalists - due to their political preferences - may express either support or reservations about populist actors. Furthermore, in the media systems with a strong tradition of journalistic interventionism, like the Polish one (Stępińska, et al., 2016), journalists are eager to share their opinions and interpretations. The official distancing (or prising) may be embodied in commentaries, editorials, interviews, and news stories.

For the purpose of the quantitative study a codebook has been developed. The data comes from the election (2015) and non-election (2016-2017) period. The study has been conducted on a sample of the content of daily quality newspapers (*Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Rzeczpospolita*, and *Nasz Dziennik*), weekly magazines (*Polityka*, *W sieci*, and *Do rzeczy*), and a tabloid (*Fakt*). The news outlets were selected due to their political orientation (from liberal to extremely conservative), circulation, and a type (quality and popular press). The keywords used for the sampling were “populism” and “populist” (regardless who was using a term in the item: a journalist or any other person).

References:

Esser, F., Stępińska, A., Hopmann, D. (2017). Populism and the media: cross-national findings and perspectives. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Stromback, C.H. De Vreese (Eds.) *Populist political communication in Europe*, Routledge, 365-380.

Mazzoleni, G. (2008). Populism and the media. In D. Albertazzi and D. McDonnell (Eds.) *Twenty-first century populism. The spectre of Western European democracy*, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mellado, C. (2015). Professional Roles in news content: Six dimensions of journalistic role performance. *Journalism Studies* 16 (4), 596-614.

Media Commercialization and the Far-Right Politics in Post-socialist Bulgaria

Martin Marinos

Colombia University

Mm5317@columbia.edu

In 2016, Brexit and the election of Donald Trump confirmed the rising popularity of far-right political movements. But, despite scholarly attention, racism and xenophobia in the easternmost part of the EU, remain relatively unexplored. This paper examines the rise of the far-right in Bulgaria, the EU's poorest member state. Specifically, the study focuses on the media politics of Ataka, the first far-right party to enter Bulgaria's parliament after 1989.

Ataka emerged as a low cost, reactionary cable television show (also called Ataka) in 2003 and metamorphosed into a political party in 2005. In 2011 it became the first Bulgarian party with its own television network. There is a revolving door between the parliamentary group and the journalists of Ataka. Several of its MPs, including the leader Volen Siderov, are also television anchors. Siderov is the editor of Ataka's newspaper. Since 2014 its media success has been emulated by two other extreme right formations that are now also in parliament. One of them is the National Front for the Salvation of Bulgaria (NFSB) whose slogan is "The Party of SKAT!" SKAT is a twenty-year-old television channel with a far-right agenda. The director of the television channel is also the leader of the party and currently a Vice Prime Minister. The other new far-right party is Bulgaria without Censorship (BWC). It is also a media project led by a famous Bulgarian television host who led Rupert Murdoch's bTV morning show for years.

These phenomena make Bulgaria an ideal place to trace the global affinity between television and far-right politics. I focus on three features of the Bulgarian media landscape that opened the gates to racism. First, I examine the detrimental effects of media concentration and the creation of media oligarchy. I argue that this environment allowed for far-right politics to emerge on the margins as small but vocal media phenomena critical of the media establishment. What is more, far-right media represented themselves as the only ones challenging the oligarchic media order. The second reason behind the growth of the far-right is the hegemony of anti-communism in mainstream media. This outdated discourse makes establishment media very boring, rigid and predictable featuring the all-too-familiar faces of the Bulgarian anti-communist right. This has presented the extreme right with another opportunity. They understand that blaming every social ill from irregular garbage collection to mass impoverishment on the specter of communism has lost its persuasive power. Unlike, the anti-communist discourse, always turned to the past, far-right politicians have offered critiques of contemporary policies and institutions. The third reason I explore in this paper is the entry of Western media conglomerates into the Eastern European markets. My argument is that, paradoxically, Western media companies facilitated the growth of far-right politics.

This article is part of a larger book project entitled *Free to Hate: The Liberalization of Socialist Mass Media in post-1989 Bulgaria* that draws on archival sources and sixty audio-recorded interviews with media workers and managers.

Re-imagining the National Self Through Demonizing the Other – The Emergence of Anti-Islamic Discourse in Hungary

Omar Sayfo

Utrecht University

o.a.sayfo@uu.nl

Until recently, anti-Islamic sentiments and Islamophobia had only been marginally present in Hungarian political and public discourse. However, the refugee crisis of 2015 and the ensuing intense political campaign were accompanied by the rapid growth of an anti-Islamic discourse. The construction of these narratives involved the adaptation and re-interpretation of Western European anti-Islamic discourses as well as the evocation of tropes from long established local anti-Roma and anti-Semitic discourses. It was simultaneously accompanied by the revival of historical self-narratives such as Hungary being a defender of Europe, halting the Ottoman Muslim advance, and the creation of new political myths such as Hungary being the savior of the persecuted Christians of Muslim-majority countries. In the popular and political discussion of complex issues such as migration, multiculturalism, or Islam per se, factual debates were soon supplanted by populist arguments over narratives and broader political visions on Hungary's identity as well as on Europe's future. This rhetoric involves polarizing opposition between Western European elites and European peoples in a vertical dimension, and between insiders (those who share our visions and values) and outsiders (Muslims threatening all that is dear to us) in a horizontal dimension. The latter are often linked to the "internal" outsiders who, according to populist narratives, support multiculturalism, hence the "Islamization" of Europe.

Based on a critical discourse analysis of high-profile political and media statements made between 2015 and 2018, this paper suggests that recent anti-Islamic discourse in Hungary could be potentially investigated in the light of the ongoing populist experimentation of the right-wing to re-imagine Hungarian identity and Hungary's place in Europe. It aims to show how, by constructing an opposition between the self and the other not in narrowly national, but in broader civilizational terms, Hungarian populists claim to break with the century-long oneway flow of ideas, and thereby re-imagine Eastern Europe in general, and Hungary in particular, no longer as a peripheral client of western ideals, but a pro-active ideological center of Europe.

The Impossible Totality of Ukraine's "People": On the Populist Discourse of the Ukrainian Maidan

Oleg Baysha

National Research University Higher School of Economics

obaysha@hse.ru

Employing Ernesto Laclau's theory of populism, according to which the collective identities of "people" emerge out of articulatory practices, this paper analyzes the populist discourse of the Ukrainian Maidan. If defined in Laclau's terms, the Maidan signified a breach in continuity of the communitarian space that manifested itself in the construction of an internal antagonistic frontier separating those in power from democratic demands of various sorts: The protesters wanted to stop abuses of power, corruption, and nepotism, to restrain oligarchic influence, to refuse economic cooperation with Russia in favor of European integration, and so on. Articulating these demands equivalentially, the movement for European integration brought to the field of Ukraine's discursivity the impossible totality of "the Ukrainian people" fighting against the "anti-popular regime" (the Maidan's privileged terms). "Maidan," which had thereby become an empty signifier, assumed the hegemonic meaning of the movement for European integration. Presenting themselves as the totality of the Ukrainian community, the activists of the Maidan acted as Laclau's "plebs who claims to be the only legitimate populous."

As the confrontation between the protesters and power unfolded, the particularism of the demands that were already part of the Maidan's equivalential chain clashed with the demands of those holding anti-Maidan views, which blurred the dichotomic frontier separating the Maidan from the ousted Ukrainian president and his government. Some of the Maidan's basic demands were linked to entirely different associations. European integration – which Maidan liberals associated predominantly with the movement toward democracy and civilization, while for Maidan radicals it was connected mainly with the movement away from Russia – became linked to the ideas of extremism, nationalism, and a colonial dependency on the West. The empty signifier "Maidan" became floating: Its meaning was "suspended."

After the victory of the revolution, when the Maidan's most prominent activists became the ministers and Parliamentary deputies, anti-Maidan Ukraine found itself marginalized, demonized, and presented as "non-Ukrainian," as "the Ukrainian condition" was imagined exclusively in populist pro-Maidan terms. Despite the fact that the vast majority of people holding anti-Maidan views were against the "coup d'etat" – their privileged term to denote the Maidan – but not in favor of joining Russia, Kyiv officials labeled the whole of the anti-Maidan movement "separatist" and anti-Maidan combatants "terrorists," in contrast to Maidan armed revolutionaries who were considered heroes. Instead of negotiations, on which the people of Donbass counted, an "anti-terrorist" military operation (ATO) was launched. Not only did this deepen further the century-old societal split, it also created all necessary preconditions for Russia to incorporate Ukraine's internal conflict into its geopolitical agenda.

The paper discursively analyzes the traces of the formation of the Maidan's populist discourse through the analysis of postings on Ukrayinska Pravda (UP) – a political website serving as a mobilization site for Maidan activists. 430 opinion pieces – posted from November 21, 2013, to February 18, 2014 – were analyzed.

“Berlusconi’s Poodle Has a Facebook Page”: How a Global Magazine Brand Mediates Populism in a Post-Communist Context

Miglina Sternadori

Texas Tech University

miglina.sternadori@ttu.edu

Populism has been described as a style of thinking that cherishes so-called simple people, condemns intellectual elites, prefers commonsense over complexity, and reveres a “unique national character that should be revived to awaken a sense of belonging and moral unity” (Kroger, 2014, p. 43). In the West, talk radio and tabloids have been known to construct or engage in populist discourses by using deliberately simplified language and “schemata that are as close as possible to the assumed knowledge” of the masses (Kroger, p. 49). In post-communist contexts, however, mediated populism has been the forte of other types of media as well, including national daily newspapers and international magazines.

This paper will argue that, in an effort to appeal to disillusioned audiences and gain advertising dollars from nouveau riche moguls, certain post-communist franchises of global media brands may embrace populist discourses that would not be considered marketable or appropriate in their domestic English-language editions. To exemplify this trend, the empirical portion of this article encompasses a textual analysis of all online content from *Cosmopolitan’s* Bulgarian edition (cosmopolitan.bg and its sister site rozali.bg), which claims to be the country’s “most popular women’s magazine.”

The Bulgarian *Cosmopolitan* not only appeals to the schemata of readers seeking to bridge their ordinary lives with those of celebrities, but also casts a positive spotlight on populist figures. Donald Trump and Silvio Berlusconi have appeared in the magazine’s coverage as charismatic celebrities, framed in the context of their wealth and “golden touch” rather than their words and actions. By contrast, the U.S. edition of *Cosmopolitan* has been unwavering in its criticism of the Trump administration, especially in regard to anti-feminist policies. The Bulgarian edition, though it contains some feminist topics, does not desist from layers of prejudice, as illustrated by simplistic headlines about “fat models” and a “sex guide for Muslim women.” Elements of populist thinking are also evident in articles that spotlight either the celebritization of “simple” people (“An Ordinary American Became an Ethiopian Princess”) or the “abasement” of elites (“Japanese Princess Gives Up Crown for Love”). These Cinderella-type stories that have not appeared in *Cosmopolitan’s* domestic edition.

The populism channeled by the Bulgarian *Cosmopolitan* is, however, unique in that it embraces the national pride present in most populist movements next to an ever-implicit assumption that “Bulgarian” means secondary to “Western.” This is evident in a story about the first Bulgarian model appearing on the magazine’s cover—a photo shoot inviting patriotic joy, despite the fact that in 10 years of publication editors and readers never questioned the ubiquitous presence of foreign models and celebrities on the cover. The magazine’s reader forums, on the other hand, mediate some explicitly nationalistic and racist discourses, including the following threads: (a) the appropriateness of a relationship between a Bulgarian woman and a Roma (Gypsy) man; (b) whether it is problematic to be in love with a non-Christian; and (c) condescending remarks about sex with Black, darker-skinned men, Asian, and circumcised men (assumed by forum participants to include only Muslims and Jews).

Such potentially brand-damaging threads would have been censored by the U.S. *Cosmopolitan*, which has moved all reader engagement to moderated social media accounts. But the market success of *Cosmopolitan’s* Bulgarian edition, whose online masthead is framed by an ad for a Bulgarian company by the name of Be Posh (beposh.bg), suggests that in a post-communist context, a global brand’s mediated populism yields rewards.

Populists in political cartoons: caricatures of the Nordic populist leaders

Juha Herkman

University of Helsinki

juha.herkman@helsinki.fi

Political cartoons have long played a visible role in the history of newspapers and political satire, although their political importance has often been seen as rather marginal. Thus, cartoons, employing humour as their main weapon, may be mocking and satirical but remain quite harmless from the point of view of political power. As many theorists have argued, humour often works as a societal 'safety valve', allowing the possibility to discharge anger and discontent in a way that does not harm but actually strengthens social order (see Mulkay 1988).

Nevertheless, there have been several occasions in the history of political cartoons, that have resulted in real political effects. The most recent and perhaps best known were the publishing of twelve cartoons depicting the Islamic Prophet Mohammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005 and the cumulative effect of the cartoons that led to the terrorist massacre at

Charlie-Hebdo magazine's editorial office in France in 2015. The issues surrounding them emerged as global media events that caused riots in many countries and a violent thirst for revenge among fundamental Islamists and their opponents as well as large-scale debates over the freedom and responsibility of speech in Western societies (see e.g. Eide et al. 2008; Hollis-Touré 2016). The underlying power of political cartoons can also be indicated by the fact that, over the course of history, authoritarian and totalitarian regimes have censored and banned political cartoons and even persecuted political cartoonists.

The power of cartoons possibly derives from the effectiveness of a caricature that visually represents features, sentiments and ideas that would require pages of literary explanations (Berger 1995: 144). Hence, political cartoons can bring to the fore underlying tendencies and commonsense ideas of the political moment (Greenberg 2002: 181; Hess & Northrop 2011: 20). As such, cartoons provide a form of opinion discourse, which has been, according to Wiid et al. (2011: 138), approached through 'weak' and 'strong' theories. In weak theories it is believed that the cartoons can reveal the public attitudes of the time, but strong theories argue that cartoons themselves 'actually persuade and shape public attitudes, intentions and behaviours (ibid.).

It is often difficult to empirically prove the actual effects of specific cartoons, if there are no such devastating and explicit consequences as in the Mohammad cartoon or the Charlie Hebdo cases (cf. Hess & Northrop 2011: 8-10). Therefore, this study applies rather the weak version of opinion discourse theory. It is argued here that by analysing cartoons depicting caricatures of contemporary populist leaders and agendas we can explore the underlying moral and normative confrontations linked to today's political populism in the Nordic liberal democracies. If political cartoons are understood as visually crystallised representations of social controversies, they serve an interesting research corpus for such topics as populism.

This paper analyses political cartoons depicting contemporary populist right-wing movements and their leaders in Sweden, Finland and Denmark since 2005. Since populism has been said to be a rather vague concept (e.g. Canovan 1999; Taggart 2000), the main objective is to explore the meanings given to populism by political cartoons when they caricature populist politicians. Even if political cartoons satirise a high variety of themes and issues, most often they depict individual politicians. Therefore, the emphasis here is on studying the caricatures that capture politicians commonly called populists, meaning the leading figures of so-called contemporary populist parties.

New Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism: A Case Study of Populist Discourse in Chinese Hip-Pop Music

Yupei Zhao and Zhi Lin

Sun Yat-Sen University

yupei@yng.media

This study aims to take up the life cycle model driven by the conceptions of cosmopolitanism and nationalism, to examine the multi-level insights of “the real” and “underground” of Chinese hip hop populist discourse in a case study of a popular music real show <Chinese hip-pop>. This study employing ethnography and critical discourse analysis, generates a critical conversation between the singer and songs to study populist discourse and its rhetoric as well as to promote a comparative approach to the study of cosmopolitanism and nationalism as a global phenomenon. This research finds unlike hip-pop spirit “be real” have become a curse in Western, “be real” is just start-up in China in which rhetorically suggests an illusion of emotional venting, resentment of reality and anti-elites. Even Chinese hip hop singers launched a revolution in youth community namely struggling for “underground dude”, mostly symbolic moves against Western dominated culture yet being significantly affected among their style, music (lyric), fashion, and a sense of generational purpose. It argues the revolution’s political identity – “Rising Chinese hip hop!” - has played a subordinate role to the power and popularity of hip hop’s commercial identity. Populist discourse embedding in “anti-institutions” and resentment of reality generates a new mode of cosmopolitanism in China. Even the concept of populism practices differently in Chinese music culture, this research argues the central common denominator of populist actions as same as those diverse movements is an appeal to ‘the people’, often defines in ethno-national terms namely Underground Xiongdi in this research, which is contrasted with a privileged and out-of-touch Mingxing.

The pop-culture of political communication

Judit Bayer

Budapest Business School

juditbayer@yahoo.com

The second generation of the internet (web2.0) has democratised the media by letting anyone – potentially even illiterate persons – to create and disseminate content. This is causing a profound change in human culture where messages compete in a media environment which is not only overloaded, but content and style represents a new era. This new generation of media creators and consumers steps beyond the analytic, logically structured, verbally sophisticated argumentative content which used to be the etalon of the publications between the age of enlightenment and the internet age. This "new" content type - which resembles more the symbolic communication of the Middle Ages - easily grasps human attention, which is the most precious scarce resource now.

Despite the low costs of publishing, being successful on the attention market becomes more difficult. According to some - although somewhat controversial - studies, a series of user choices lead to polarising opinions, growing extremism and more emotional argumentation. Whether access to quality content can be influenced by policy measures is still an open question. The operation of algorithms are not transparent at this time. Users appear to be inclined to limit their choices to the narrowest selection of content, far from being rational. European countries are on the road to regulate platform providers and make them private censors of online content.

Colonizing Twitter: Trump's Tweets and the Discourse of Gendered Subjectivity

Meredith Pruden

Georgia State University

Mpruden1@gsu.edu

"If Hillary Clinton can't satisfy her husband what makes her think she can satisfy America?" Donald Trump mused in a since deleted, but well-documented, retweet that went viral in April 2015— just months before he officially announced his candidacy for President of the United States (POTUS) that June. We're living in a time of unprecedented access to powerful actors and unrivaled disparities between those in power and the public at large. In the United States since late 2016, when Trump won the office of POTUS, this trend can be traced through his Twitter feed @realDonaldTrump. The more than 35,000 Tweets found in this Twitter timeline represent the first time a POTUS has regularly and consistently communicated with the public outside the historically standard gatekeepers, including the mass media and official White House communication channels. What's more, with nearly 40 million followers, Trump's feed falls within the top 25 Twitter accounts in the world today.

Divisive gendered discourse has been a cornerstone of Trump's presidency thus far. This narrative did not begin with his candidacy for POTUS, and it does not exist only on Twitter. However, Twitter provides a particularly relevant platform for a closer examination of Trump's gendered speech. While it may be tempting to view Trump's aggressive gendered speech, as illuminated via his Twitter feed, as culturally transgressive, it actually parallels longstanding societal gender norms that devalue women's status and situate them as less than their male counterparts. Trump, with his populist rhetoric, has tapped into these norms, and the explosive popularity of Trump and his Twitter feed specifically has potentially dramatic consequences not only for the people of the United States but for the global community at large. However, research into presidential use of new media such as Twitter is still developing and, as a result, is both in flux and under-researched. This paper attempts to fill gaps in the existing literature, while answering the question of how the colonizing presence of Trump's Twitter feed speaks to and frames gender in the United States and around the world. It would seem Trump has, if unwittingly, harnessed the power of social media to combat a general public malaise around presidential discourse and to push his populist agenda despite it. Trump's Tweets are a real-time, stream-of-consciousness reminder of this upset that extends beyond the borders of the United States (and even the West) into the far reaches of the world.

This paper approaches this topic from a feminist post-structuralist perspective and uses a data set of nearly 10,000 Tweets from June 16, 2015 through November 27, 2017. Four themes were identified:

- The Trickster: Victim and victimizer
- The StraightEdger: Security, jobs and trade
- The Liberator: Anti politically correct
- The Tweetenfreuder: The media

Notions of women, family and gender course throughout all themes and, as such, are not included as a standalone category. After a narrative analysis and discussion of these themes, an argument is made that Trump is effectively colonizing Twitter and the world.

Are you talking to me? Dialog and interaction on Twitter of the populist political actors from Spain, Italy, France and United Kingdom

Laura Alonso-Muñoz and Andreu Casero-Ripollés

Universitat Jaume I de Castelló

lalonso@uji.es

The populist phenomenon has gained a remarkable importance during the last decade. The victory of Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Elections or the increase of the anti-establishment parties in Europe, as a result of the global financial crisis, have caused numerous political and communicative consequences in the western democracies. The use of social media, like Twitter, allows them to set up functions that go from the informative self-mediation until the interaction with users, aspects that redefine the paper that plays populist political actors in political communication and his relations with citizens and journalists. However, to the best of our knowledge, nothing is known about the relationship that populist political actors maintain with citizenry and media in social media.

The main goal of this paper is to analyse the use of Twitter do it by part of the main populist political actors of Spain, Italy, France and United Kingdom to set a dialog with his strategic audiences. Specifically, we are looking for how they take advantage of the dialogic potential of Twitter and how they promote in his profiles the bidirectional communication with the citizenry and the media, out of electoral periods that can compromise his use.

The methodology applied in this investigation is based on the technique of the quantitative content analysis. Specifically, this work takes at its starting point the analysis model proposed by Kent and Taylor (1998) subsequently adapted by Rybalko and Seltzer (2010). In this regard, two variables are analysed: the generation of return visits principle and the dialogic loop principle. The sample is composed by the profiles of Twitter of Podemos and Pablo Iglesias (Spain), MoVimento 5 Stelle and Beppe Grillo (Italy), the Front National and Marine Le Pen (France), and the UKIP and Nigel Farage and Paul Nuttall (United Kingdom).

Three temporary periods have been analysed: May and November 2016 and March 2017. This involves an analysis of 9.128 messages. The results obtained show a significantly unequal management in the interaction with users between the profiles analysed. Despite the fact that appeal to the people is one of the essential characteristics of the populist phenomenon, these actors have no interaction with citizens on Twitter and only a slight dialogue with users have been observed in the Spanish case. Regarding media interaction, the rightwing populist parties have a much more direct relationship with the media players that the rest.

Through the use of mentions, hashtags and links share their appearances on television programs to activate a self-promotion of their political program and to articulate their own frames on the news media issues. Instead, left-wing populist parties limit their interaction with media and journalists. Podemos, and its leader, establish a sporadic dialogue with media actors and usually do so by incorporating hashtags created by the media into their messages. M5S and Beppe Grillo practically exclude interaction with mass media and opt for sharing their own content.

Tweeting from the East: The Role of Social Media in the Rise of Populism in Bulgaria

Elza Ibroscheva

Webster University

elzaibroscheva@webster.edu

Populism as a means of agitating the masses and organizing into an anti-elitist political revolt and an opposition to liberal democracy relies heavily on channeling one message—disrupting the establishment by any means possible. To succeed, populists of all fire-brands rely heavily on media outlets or their own media-savvy. Thus, populist candidates not only reach wide audiences, but also create a certain type of “spectacle” that amplifies the ideological power of their political message. It is no coincidence, then, that many of the successful populist leaders around the world are also master media strategists, or at least are surrounded by teams of seasoned media illusionists and advisors. As Pierre-André Taguieff observed, the mastering of television – the spectacle-medium by definition – by populist leaders has led to television becoming the primary tribune for the charismatic political leader. “Populism has already turned into telepopulism. The successful demagogue of post-modernity is the telegenic tribune” (cited in Mény and Surel, 2000: 125).

Yet, this last electoral cycle around the globe demonstrated that television is no longer the leading tribune for populist messages. Arguably, the global ubiquity of social media has become the driving engine behind the success of populist leaders, prompting *The Economist* to urge the political center to take heed, calling on “centrist politicians... [to] stop twiddling their thumbs and get tweeting.” In the West, the role of social media in propelling the success of populist parties has been studied, albeit not widely. Yet, no such studies exist in Eastern Europe, where ironically, the political scientists seem obsessed with the subject of populism; nevertheless, recognition of the role of media in promulgating populist ideas is almost non-existent. This study proposes an examination of leading Bulgarian politicians, who are also considered populists—specifically, GERB and the United Patriots (IMRO, NSFB, and Ataka). Through a qualitative analysis of their social media presence, channels, frequencies and style of delivery and a systemic content analysis of their social media output, including content type (photos, memes, video links, text, etc) themes (history, culture, masculinity, Europe, immigration refugees, Roma, family, other), and source of content (original posts or content from other identified or unidentified source), this study aims to explore whether Bulgarian populist politicians are indeed using social media as a powerful vehicle to reach audiences and whether the social media tactics used by populists are indeed ideologically coherent with their professed political platforms. Such an analysis can clarify how politicians utilize social media and “package” messages and more importantly, will help us understand how they reach audiences and find support and reception among viewers and readers. This study is timely and important given that Bulgaria is scheduled to take over the EU Council presidency in 2018 and many in the European community have voiced concerns about the extreme far-right and the fascist leanings expressed by Bulgaria’s ruling populist parties.

References:

The Economist (2015, November 19). Extreme tweeting: Few of the social-media stars among Europe’s politicians are centrists. Available at: <https://www.economist.com/news/europe/21678828-few-social-media-stars-among-europes-politicians-are-centrists-extreme-tweeting>.

Mény, Y., & Yves, S. (2000). *Par le peuple, pour le peuple. Le populisme et les démocraties*. Paris: Fayard.

Reclaiming the People: Algorithmic Strategies and Counter-Populist Social Media Activism in Israel

Yoav Halperin
New York University
yoavhal@gmail.com

In this talk I analyze the emergence of new forms of social media activism, which center on algorithmically-informed strategies for enhancing the online visibility of counter-populist discourse. Drawing on examples from my ethnographic study of political interactions on Israeli Facebook, I argue that such strategic practices call for an expansion of the theoretical models that have hitherto guided much of the research on populism and social media.

Populist politics, particularly in its right-wing form, is often grounded in a divisive political imaginary that opposes an authentic “people” to excluded groups of minorities or “inner-enemies.” Like in other places, such an exclusionary discourse has become increasingly prevalent in Israeli society over the past few years, as more and more right-wingers began characterizing leftist groups and political parties as filled with unpatriotic traitors. To a large degree, the spread of this populist imaginary was facilitated by social media platforms like Facebook, which enables right-wingers to routinely flood high-profile leftist profiles with vicious and hateful comments. In so doing, right-wing users create an online affective environment that makes the Israeli Left appear as a shrinking and excluded camp.

Faced with the dominance of right-wing populist discourse online, various leftwing social media users began devising new forms of online activism. The proponents of this new type of activism are not interested in facilitating debates or organizing protests. Instead, they focus their energies exclusively on bolstering the visible presence and amplifying the voices of the leftist camp on social media. By employing strategies that are informed by their understanding of social media’s algorithmic infrastructure and interface design, such activists work to increase the online presence of leftist publics, and thus reclaim their part in the “people.”

My analysis of this new form of social media activism focuses on a case study of a secret Israeli Facebook group called “Strengthening the Left Online.” Since its launch in 2016, the group’s members have been engaging in online tactical maneuvers that aim at making Facebook’s algorithm increase the visibility of critical left-wing comments that appear on the pages of prominent right-wing figures. In so doing, these online activists hope to establish the Left’s dominance over the Israeli social media sphere, muffle right-wing populist voices, and invigorate the entire leftist camp. --By drawing on interviews I conducted with the group’s founders and on examples from its Facebook page, I discuss their online strategies and their understanding of both the uniqueness and usefulness of this form of activism.

In addition, I argue that such practices demonstrate users’ own understanding of the political significance of social media. More particularly, they show that users often approach social media as a battleground where political groups struggle for amplifying their camp’s presence, drowning out rival voices, and impose competing representations of the “people.” As such, an analysis of the presuppositions that lead users to devise such strategic maneuvers allows for an articulation of a new theoretical framework that can help shed light on related online populist practices.

The effects of cross-cutting exposure on populist and anti-immigrant attitudes

Carolina Plescia, Petro Tolochko, & Hyunjin Song

University of Vienna

hyunjin.song@univie.ac.at

In recent years, public opinion in Austria and beyond has become increasingly polarized with a large number of citizens holding starkly divided opinions on key issues like immigration and welfare inequality. In addition, many citizens show growing discontent towards mainstream politics. In line with these developments, there has been a growing scholarly concern of increasing penetration and proliferation of (far-right) populist discourse among ordinary citizens in their everyday discussions.

This study investigates whether and how “cross-cutting” exposure, or exposure to dissimilar political viewpoint, is related to populist and anti-immigrant attitudes. While a great amount of attention is now devoted to the study of the determinants of both anti-immigrant and populist attitudes among the public (e.g., Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014), the question of whether and how everyday political conversation affects these attitudes remains largely unexplored. Albeit political discussion among individuals is considered by many to be one of the most influential sources of political attitudes (Mutz 1999, 2006; Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Pattie & Johnston, 2009; Eveland & Hively, 2009), existing studies have almost completely overlooked the impact that the immediate social relationships have on populist and anti-immigrant attitudes.

Against current developments in the polarization of public opinion, this study aims to assess the impact of cross-cutting exposure on populist and anti-immigrant attitudes and probes whether this impact depends on political dissimilarity of discussion network ties as well as on citizens’ willingness to engage in political discussion. Since encountering dissimilar opinions would encourage people to take others’ views into account (Mutz, 2002; Mutz & Mondak, 2006), exposure to oppositional views should then moderate populist and anti-immigrant attitudes, if not such exposure creates attitudinal ambivalence (Levitan & Visser, 2009; Visser & Mirabile, 2004). Moreover, the influence of political discussion is closely linked to an individual’s propensity to engage in discussion during, and in response to, political disagreement (Kim, Scheufele, & Han, 2011).

This study makes at least three important contributions. First, it represents one of the first attempts to investigate the effect of informal social networks on populist and anti-immigrant attitudes. Second, it advances our knowledge of social interactions by investigating simultaneously and in line with state-of-the-art developments in this field of research, the main aspects of social networks, namely the frequency and homogeneity of social interactions as well as the willingness to engage in political discussion. Third, this study represents one of the first attempts to study the pervasiveness of social interactions and political discussion outside the US context in European democracies. Specifically, the Austrian context, is an ideal case to investigate given that the Austrian electorate is increasingly polarized over immigration and welfare inequality, while populist attitudes appear to be rising, as evidenced by the recent national elections. As such, this proposal lies at the epicentre of current academic and public debates in Europe and beyond.

Being told or being heard? How populist voters respond to figuratively framed right-wing populist rhetoric

Amber Boeynaems

VU University Amsterdam

a.boeynaems@vu.nl

Over the past two decades, various Western countries witnessed an increase in electoral support for right-wing populist parties (RWPPs; Hameleers, Bos & de Vreese, 2017). Current research suggests that the success of RWPPs can be explained from, at least, two perspectives: (1) a framing-theory perspective (Bos, van der Brug & de Vreese, 2013) and (2) an intergroup perspective (Berning & Schleuter, 2016). We contrast both perspectives in an experiment testing how voters with RWPP preferences respond to typically right-wing populist rhetoric. First, from a framing-theory perspective, scholars propose that right-wing populist rhetoric has a persuasive impact on (parts of) the electorate (Hameleers et al., 2017; Matthes & Schmuck, 2017). The frequent use of metaphors and/or hyperboles to frame right-wing populist discourse (de Landtsheer et al., 2011) can add to its intense and emotive character and persuasive potential (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Wodak, 2015). Thus, from a framing-theory perspective, we hypothesized that figuratively framed populist statements are more persuasive than non-figurative statements. Second, from an intergroup perspective, scholars argue that populist rhetoric resonates with, rather than steers, existing political opinion (Berning & Schleuter, 2016; Rydgren, 2008). That is, voters who strongly identify with a RWPP likely have an anti-immigration stance that is already in line with RWPP ideas, and does not need to be fueled by populist metaphors and hyperboles (Ivarsflaten, 2008). Thus, from an intergroup perspective, we expected RWPP identification strength to influence the persuasive effects of figuratively framed populist statements: weakly attached voters are likelier to be affected than strongly attached voters. To test these assumptions, we conducted an experiment with a 2 (populist metaphor: absent, present) x 2 (populist hyperbole: present, absent) between-subjects design. All participants (N = 411, 54.6% male, Mage = 52.53 year, SDage = 13.63) indicated to have voted for a Dutch RWPP (Freedom Party/Forum for Democracy) in the 2017 Dutch national elections. Participants read a short populist statement by an anonymous Dutch politician. The metaphorically framed statements referred to economic refugees as thieves. The conditions with populist hyperboles, comprised exaggerations like by all means necessary. We measured political persuasion, message intensity, negative emotions and party identification strength. Results showed no direct persuasive impact of figuratively framed populist statements. Regardless of the employed rhetorical style, participants positively evaluated the politicians and the proposed policy. The stronger voters identified with a RWPP, the more positive their evaluations were. Unexpectedly, populist metaphors did have subtle negative indirect effects on political persuasion via negative emotions, message intensity and aptness. These negative indirect effects diminished as voters strongly identified with a RWPP. Thus, rather than boosting persuasion, as was expected from a framing-theory perspective, populist metaphors and hyperboles did not add to the persuasiveness of right-wing populist statements. In fact, they caused indirect boomerang effects, mainly among voters who weakly identify with the RWPP they voted for. As was predicted from an intergroup perspective, strongly identified voters were likelier to remain unabatedly supportive. Thus, the intense and emotive populist rhetoric employed by RWPPs might deter parts of their constituents.

References

- Berning, C. C., & Schleuter, E. (2016). The dynamics of radical right-wing populist party preferences and perceived group threat: A comparative panel analysis of three competing hypotheses in the Netherlands and Germany. *Social Science Research*, 55, 83-93. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2015.09.003
- Bos, L., van der Brug, W., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). An experimental test of the impact of style and rhetoric on the perception of right-wing populist and mainstream party leaders. *Acta Politica*, 48(2), 192-208. doi:10.1057/ap.2012.27

de Landtsheer, C., Kalkhoven, L., & Broen, L. (2011). De beeldspraak van Geert Wilders, een Tsunami over Nederland? [The metaphors of Geert Wilders, a Tsunami over the Netherlands?], *Tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 39(4), 5–21.

Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). “They did it”: The effects of emotionalized blame attribution in populist communication. *Communication Research*, 44(6), 870-900. doi:10.1177/0093650216644026

Ivarsflaten, E. (2008). What unites right-wing populists in Western Europe? Re-examining grievance mobilization models in seven successful cases. *Comparative Political Studies*, 41(1), 3-23. doi: 10.1177/0010414006294168

Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(3), 319-345. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x

Matthes, J., & Schmuck, D. (2017). The effects of anti-immigrant right-wing populist ads on implicit and explicit attitudes: A moderated mediation model. *Communication Research*, 44(4), 556-581. doi:10.1177/0093650215577859

Rydgren, J. (2008). Immigration sceptics, xenophobes or racists? Radical right-wing voting in six West European countries. *European Journal of Political Research*, 47(6), 737-765. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2008.00784.x

Wodak, R. (2015). *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean*. London: Sage.

Diaspora and Populism: An Analysis of Chinese American Trump Supporters' Participation in the Right Movement in the United States

Hongmei Li
Miami University
Lih19@miamioh.edu

Donald Trump's presidential election campaign and his presidency are often associated with populism, anti-immigration, bigotry, sexism and isolationism. It is not surprising that Trump does not gain much support among immigrants. Only 18% of Asian Americans voted for Donald Trump. Among them, 24% of Chinese Americans voted for Trump. While the percentage of Chinese American supporters was not the highest among Asian Americans--32% of Vietnamese and 27% of Filipinos voted for Trump--, interestingly Chinese Trump supporters have become more organized and more vocal after the election. Their activism aims to show their continuing support for Trump's policies and Republican politicians. For example, they have formed the Chinese Americans for Trump (CAFA), the Chinese American Alliance (CAA), and Asian American GOP Coalition (AAGC). Furthermore, with the popularity of Chinese language social media platform WeChat, they have also opened several influential WeChat public accounts, such as Feiyang Zaixian (Flying Over the Ocean Online), Beimei Huaren ZhiSheng (The Voice of North American Chinese), Meiguo Huaren ZhiSheng (The Voice of Chinese Americans), Beimei Liuxuesheng Ribao (The Overseas Chinese Students Daily of North America) and Civil Rights. As individual supporters, they actively participate in various WeChat discussion forums that include Chinese-speaking members from other parts of the world, thus attempting to shape the political discourse and local politics among Chinese Americans as well as the political knowledge of America globally.

However, their often biased and populist views are constantly confronted and rebutted by Chinese Americans with more knowledge about American politics and the racialized history in the United States. There are ongoing debates among Trump supporters and non-supporters. While Trump supporters were more aggressive before the election, they have since faced more shaming from the non-supporters for their misinformation, rumors, and twisted understanding of reality. In order to systematically confront the messages, those who do not support Trump have also created their own WeChat public accounts, such as Meiguo Huaren (Chinese in America), Beida Fei, and MIT Tucaojun and established various liberal-leaning forums and clubs to educate first-generation Chinese Americans.

This paper examines how and why Chinese Trump supporters participate in and respond to the populist movement in the United States and how other Chinese Americans who do not support Trump respond to their rhetoric and activism. The paper is set against the backdrop of the perceived voiceless and invisibility of Asian Americans in American racial politics. The essay aims to debunk a few myths regarding diaspora and progressive politics. While it is often assumed that immigrants support progressive politics and social movement, the support for Trump among some Chinese Americans suggests that the diaspora can also embrace conservatism, which results from their past cultural influence as well as the complicated politics produced by deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Second, Chinese immigrants' political participation is closely linked to global politics and political discourses in China channeled through various communication technologies, especially the social media platform WeChat. Thus, WeChat mediates the political discussion of the mainstream English media and first-generation immigrants. Third, through analyzing such political participations, we can see the emerging ideas and leadership that show complicated relationship commercial interests and political ideology and global and local politics.

Methodology: This essay analyzes my personal observations and public discussions in a variety of WeChat discussion forums as well as publications of WeChat public accounts. Interviews will also be conducted with leading Trump supporters and Chinese American community leaders and politicians.

Expert validation will be used to ensure the validity of the arguments and the draft will be checked by Chinese community leaders with deep knowledge about the recent activism in the Chinese American community.

This essay contributes to the understanding of populism among Chinese diasporas in the United States in the context of global politics, racism, gender and class. It also contributes to the understanding of the role of WeChat in mediating the political discourse among Chinese American immigrants.

Populist Predispositions among UK and Spanish News Avoiders

Ruth Palmer & Benjamin Toff

IE University & University of Minnesota

bjtoff@umn.edu

This paper examines the link between populist movements and a rejection of conventional news media by people on the periphery of emergent populist movements in two unique political information environments: the UK and Spain. We draw on in-depth interviews with more than 80 individuals who say they rarely-to-never access conventional news media. These interviews were conducted during periods in which populist movements appeared to gain significant traction in each country: in the first case in the aftermath of the Brexit vote and the rise of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour party, and in the second case in the midst of the 2017 Catalan independence referendum. Using a comparative qualitative approach to audience research, we show considerable uniformity across the two country contexts in news avoiders' attitudes and habits regarding politics and news, despite major differences in the countries' media and political information environments. We find that study participants were generally not active embracers of populist movements themselves; however, they often demonstrated attitudes toward news and politics that made them predisposed to be favorable to populist appeals. Specifically, study participants showed a strong disaffection from political and civic affairs—a feeling that politics was too focused on distant matters and not connected to daily life. Crucially, news avoiders did not view conventional sources of news as distinct from, or in opposition to, powerful elites in government. Rather, news was often viewed as a distraction from the real matters that concerned people in their daily lives, such as unemployment, or crime, or family leave. We argue that this pervasive sense of alienation from not only establishment politics but also mainstream media may serve as building blocks for a populist worldview. Many news avoiders felt that the most significant problems in their lives were left unaddressed by both the political and media establishment and often turned to non-traditional news sources—which generally do not perform the critical watchdog role usually attributed to the mainstream media—and felt those nontraditional sources met their needs better. We conclude that populist leaders that can make convincing claims to address news avoiders' real problems using nontraditional news channels are likely to find them a receptive audience. While news avoiders occupy an extreme end of the news consumption spectrum, we argue that their attitudes merit close attention in an environment of increasing media choice. If increasing numbers of people opt out of conventional news, the population with these populist predispositions is likely to grow.

Communication Ecologies, Populism, and the Crisis of Democracy

Lew Friedland, Christopher Wells, Katherine Cramer, Dhavan Shah and Michael Wagner

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Kathy.cramer@wisc.edu

Democracy in the United States is in crisis due to declines in trust and confidence in political processes and institutions in the eyes of large numbers of its citizens. Yet crucial aspects of civil society are breaking apart in the United States, with authoritarian populism rising within this fractured

social structure. Core integrative mechanisms that once provided for common ground, such as cross-cutting social networks, robust civic membership and newspaper/local TV news use have been displaced by the “network society” and social media, with clusters of shared opinion and self-supporting facts. Concomitantly, the economic prospects for much of the working and middle classes have been dimmed magnifying political and cultural differences and adding fuel to unresolved ethnic and racial tensions. Populist themes are simultaneously fueling and fueled by this communication ecology. Political culture is increasingly defined by competing groups who see each other in zero sum struggles over resources. To examine these issues, we assemble, model, and analyze a comprehensive communication ecology of a regional socio-political geography for the first time — the American state of Wisconsin — that combines content coding of Wisconsin news and social media discourse with statewide campaign advertising and public surveys. The technical aspects of this project include mixed methods work combining political ethnography, computational analysis, quantitative analyses, content analysis and elite interviews. Since 2010, Wisconsin politics have been a microcosm of divisions around the nation. Many layers of social connection and communication underlie this increased acrimony. These include: (a) shifts in news coverage, including declines in newspaper readership, and heated rhetoric on political talk radio, (b) the rise of social media linking local to national politics, (c) the bombarding of citizens with large doses of political advertising, and (d) divisive appeals embedded within elite discourse seen across both media and politics. We contend that the divergence of experience and opinions between ideological, geographical, and occupational subclusters has been accelerated by shifts in the communication ecology. Our research questions are focused on illuminating and integrating key components of the communication ecology: (a) What is the nature of interpersonal communication flows and how is their content related to the media, social and political context in which people are embedded? (b) Do individuals encounter ideologically consistent or crosscutting information and opinion flows in social media? (c) Is news in print, broadcast, and digital outlets rich with local content, and are individuals exposed, attentive, and engaged with this content? (d) What is the content of partisan media outlets, does it originate from outside the state, and how responsive is the public to its appeals? (e) How does the placement of political advertising by Democrats, Republicans, and interest groups target certain groups and attend to their concerns? The interplay of these elements allows us to see populism not in terms of isolated groups, themes, or movements. In contrast, we show how it is embedded within a larger communication ecology and dynamic interaction between elites, media systems, and publics.

Populist messages and their amplification in social media: Experimental evidence from Ukraine

Larisa Doroshenko & Fangjing Tu

University of Wisconsin-Madison

doroshenko@wisc.edu

Nationalist and populist sentiments are thriving on both sides of the Atlantic. While scholars explain their success by voters' demands and socio-economic factors (for a review, see Mudde, 2007), less attention is paid to the role of mass media in promoting populists' agenda (Vliegenthart, Boomgaarden & van Spanje, 2012; Ellinas, 2010; Mazzoleni, 2008), and even fewer studies address spread of populism and nationalism in social media (Wojcieszak, 2010). This paper focuses on Ukraine because nationalist appeals have been previously linked to mobilizing potential during mass protests there (Beissinger, 2013; Kuzio, 2012), while social media played an important role in organization of the Euromaidan revolution (Bohdanova, 2014; Onuch, 2015).

This project makes the first step in improving understanding of people's response to far-right populist messages in social media by seeking answers to the following questions: How do people respond to messages with populist cues in social media? Is there a difference in response to populist messages with and without nationalist sentiments? What are the individual characteristics that moderate this response to populist cues?

To address these questions, current research uses data from an experimental survey conducted in one of the large universities in Kyiv among a convenient sample of 300 undergraduate students. This survey employed a 2x3 factorial design, where participants were randomly assigned to social media posts with or without populist cues about three issues prominent during election campaigns: fighting corruption, future form of government, and the status of the Russian language. Participants were asked to assess how likely they would endorse this post, share it with their network, and positively or negatively comment on it. We used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) with robust standard errors to examine the within-person effect of the three issues; the between-persons effects of populist cues in social media post, perceived issue importance, and the interaction between them; and cross-level interactions between populist cues and three issues. Control variables included demographics, political ideology, social media use, self-efficacy, tolerance, political participation, and language use.

Results demonstrate that people were more likely to endorse with liking, sharing, and positive commenting messages with populist cues. This pattern was more evident when posts were about "pet issues" of nationalist parties, such as language policy, while for the issue of corruption participants were more likely to promote moderate messages. Moreover, the effect of perceived issue importance on participant's endorsement was conditioned on the existence of populist cues. For example, participants who perceived language issue as more important, were more likely to promote a nationalist post with populist cues and less likely to promote a moderate one.

These findings are significant because they demonstrate that nationalist parties can garner support from people across ideological spectrum when their messages include populist cues. This effect is stronger when these messages are related to national identity and for those people who perceive these issues as important. This combination can create a perception of social opinion climate and have tangible implications for election outcomes and success of such political actors.

References

Beissinger, M. (2013). The semblance of democratic revolution: Coalitions in Ukraine's Orange revolution. *American Political Science Review*, 107(3), 1-19.

Bohdanova, T. (2014). Unexpected revolution: The role of social media in Ukraine's Euromaidan uprising. *European View*, 13(1), 133-142. doi:10.1007/s12290-014-0296-4.

Ellinas, A. A. (2010). *The media and the right-wing populist in Western Europe: Playing the nationalist card*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kuzio, T. (2012). Democratic revolutions from a different angle: Social populism and national identity in Ukraine's 2004 Orange Revolution. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 20(1), 41-54. doi:10.80/14782804.2012.656951.

Mazzoleni, G. (2008). Populism and the media. In Albertazzi D. & McDonnell, D. (Eds.). *Twenty-first century populism: The spectre of Western European democracy* (pp.49-64). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Onuch, O. (2015). EuroMaidan protests in Ukraine: Social media versus social networks. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 62(4), 217-235. doi: 10.1080/10758216.2015.1037676.

Viegenthart, R., Boomgaarden, H. G., Van Spanje, J. (2012). Anti-immigrant party support and media visibility: A cross-party, over-time perspective. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion & Parties*, 22(3), 315-358.

Wojcieszak, M. (2010). "Don't talk to me": effects of ideologically homogeneous online groups and politically dissimilar offline ties on extremism. *New Media & Society*, 12(4), 637-655. doi:10.1177/1461444809342775.

Exploring Populism in Israel: The effectiveness of Netanyahu's attacks on the media

Yariv Tsfati

University of Haifa

ytsfati@com.haifa.ac.il

While Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's political tactics has long ago been defined as neo-populist or even tele-populist (Peri, 2004), the mechanism in which his anti-establishment and anti-elitist tactics translate to electoral success have not been empirically explored. Focusing on Netanyahu's anti-media rhetoric and policies, this presentation explores why and how Netanyahu's harsh anti-media statements and his media policies, which some claim that are aimed to weaken mainstream media institutions, are politically advantageous from his perspective.

Study 1 will explore the effectiveness of anti-media rhetoric in the context of the 2015 election campaign. Throughout the campaign, Prime Minister Netanyahu's standing in the polls was dramatically lower than the actual elections results, with some media polls even predicting a substantial advantage to the left-wing Zionist Camp Party. In the five days preceding Election Day, however, Netanyahu gained around nine seats in the Knesset, emerging from the campaign with a sweep victory, gaining most of these last minute votes from small right-wing parties. Data collected immediately after the elections demonstrate that perceptions that mainstream media were hostile towards Netanyahu and his Likud party were strong predictors of shifting support from small parties towards the Likud. The presentation will stress the role played by right wing media in cultivating the perception that mainstream media are biased against Netanyahu. In order to theoretically establish these hypotheses I will use communication theories about the influence of presumed media influence and studies about elite cues and their influence on perceived media bias.

Study 2 examines audience interpretations of Netanyahu's policies and rhetoric about the initiation of a new "Public Broadcast Corporation." In 2014, the Knesset passed the "Public Broadcasting Bill", which included the closing of the Israel Broadcast Authority [that had suffered from harsh political intervention and severe financial crisis] and the establishment of a "Public Broadcast Corporation" that would be disconnected from political influence because its CEO would be appointed by an independent public committee, appointed by a retired judge (instead of appointment by a cabinet minister in the IBA).

Prime Minister Netanyahu, who called for the privatization of the IBA during his first term as prime minister (Peri, 2004), initially supported the reform, and even presented it as an achievement in his 2015 election campaign (e.g., Benziman, 2017). However, by the summer of 2016, Netanyahu flipped-flopped and became a major opponent of the establishment of the Corporation, arguing that it would become a "left-wing corporation" (Baruch, 2017). He initiated a major political crisis, calling for the closing of the corporation and the rehabilitation of the IBA. A large sample online survey was conducted to examine the association between exposure to the populist rhetoric, spread through right-wing media, and audience interpretations of the motives of the stakeholders involved in the "corporation crisis". Results demonstrated that mistrust in media and exposure to right-wing media were associated with perceiving that Netanyahu's motivations are pure, even after controlling for a diversity of political and demographic covariates.

The relationship between populist attitudes and support for political violence in Hungary and Poland

Peter Kreko

Central European University
krekopeter@hotmail.com

While there are some sporadic studies that indicate that populist mobilization (partially through mass media) can increase violence- mainly from Africa and Latin America and the United States (see for example Kagwanja, 2009; De la Torre, 2010, Berlet, 2009/a), the relationship between populist attitudes and support for political violence is a topic that is largely under-researched. This study, based on large and representative samples from Poland and Hungary (N>1000 in each country) aims to explore this relationship, using the subscales of populism measurement tools is Silva, Littvay et al. (2017), and Akkerman, Mudde and Zaslove (2014). Our early results indicate that Manichean Worldview and anti-pluralism are associated with higher levels of support for political violence (in line with Berlet, 2009's theoretical findings), and higher support for authoritarian political leadership as well. The higher level of people-centrism, on the other hand, comes with lower support for political violence. Interestingly, anti-elitist attitudes also come with lower levels of support for political violence. The results indicate that the relationship between populist attitudes and support for political violence is complex and not uni-dimensional. The results also suggest (while not prove) that populist messaging is not necessarily catalysator of violence- some aspects of populism, such as people-centrism, might even serve as buffers against violence.

Digital Media and Populist Time — Trump, Twitter, and Realtimeness

Henrik Bødker & Chris Anderson
 Aarhus University & Leeds University
 hb@cc.au.dk

While democracies are governed by and for the people they often have a range of in-built measures of delay meant to act as buffers between sudden public whims and broader continuities. Among such measures are the rhythms of delegation, the formulation and processing of bills, checks and balances and the mediation through political parties. Such specific measures of delay are connected to notions of deliberation, interpretation and rationality, values that are deeply embedded in the broader political cultures of liberal democracies. Both specific measures and values of delay are broadly speaking ways of intervening in and/or delaying more immediate reactions — and as such to be seen as processes of de-affectivisation.

Journalism has played into such processes of delay as well as attempted to accelerate them. While gatekeeping, research and publishing rhythms on the one hand have drawn out political processes, the immediate and shocking have, together with steadily decreasing intervals of publishing, often poised popular sentiments against bureaucratic inertia. Such challenges have become much more visible in a digital media landscape where politicians or anyone can bypass the gatekeeping of journalism through social media. A significant aspect is here the emergence of complex relationships between politics, social media and anti-elitist positions; and it is such relationships this paper explores by elaborating what is tentatively called “populist time”.

Donald Trump’s use of Twitter here serves as a stepping stone for the conceptualising more general dynamics spanning countries, cultures and media platforms. As populism legitimizes itself by its ability to know and act upon the “unmediated” will of the people it can, broadly speaking, be seen as attempts to challenge the delays that have sedimented within both political and journalistic cultures. Within social media streams, such challenges are arguably produced through what Weltevrede et al. (2014) call “realtimeness” and which — in this context — should be seen as a product of interactions between political cultures and constituencies and the features of and processes on the platform of Twitter. “Realtimeness” is thus not merely about the speed of transmission.

Seeing populist time as an instance of “realtimeness” directs attention to how the pace, language, engagements, political contexts and cultures, and technological affordances of and around @realDonaldTrump make up a “complex folding of pasts, presents, and futures” (Weltevrede et al., 2012, 144) within something akin to an “affective news stream...” (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012, 279) that seemingly signal the “real” about to undermine elitist structures. What is offered are arguably anticipatory and messianic “moments” short-circuiting history through the embodiment of an unknown future, a person, the president, Trump — this “ghost” or “strange, strangely familiar and inhospitable at the same time (unheimlich, uncanny)” (Derrida, 1994, 168). Following such lines of inquiry, this paper analyses an archived period of @realDonaldTrump as well as its mediated context in order to, firstly, develop the notion of populist time and, secondly to investigate how journalism — in its various forms — plays into or against the formation of this specific digital temporality.

References:

Derrida, J (1994) *Specters of Marx*. New York: Routledge.

Papacharissi, P. & Oliveira, M. (2012) Affective News and Networked Publics: The Rhythms of News Storytelling on #Egypt. *Journal of Communication* 62(2): 266–282.

Weltevrede, E. , Helmond, A. & Gerlitz, C (2014) The Politics of Real-time: A Device Perspective on Social Media Platforms and Search Engines. *Theory, Culture & Society* 31(6) 125–150.

American Populist Rhetoric from 1850 to 2016

W. Russell Neuman

New York University

wrn210@nyu.edu

Donald Trump's unexpected and disconcerting success at rousing base emotions and energetic political support with his populist rhetoric provides an important opportunity for communication researchers to reexamine the fundamental tenets of their conceptions of political communication. Although Trump himself is relatively new to the political scene, populist appeals have a long and complex history. John Judis' *Populist Explosion* (2016) contends that populism is actually an innovation of 19th century American politics which was, in turn, adopted by political figures in Latin America and Europe.

As a concept in political communication research, populism has been famously resistant to a straightforward or simple definition. While most variants of populism include a strong element of nationalism, although an emphasis on national interest is central to almost all electoral rhetorical strategies. What gives populism its special character, however, is its combination of exclusionism (including themes of anti-immigration, the need to protect cultural homogeneity, and ethnic stereotyping) and anti-elitism (including disparagement of the media, distrust of government, and a belief that the system is unfairly rigged in favor of elites).

This analysis traces these themes from transcripts of Father Coughlin's 1930's anti-communist, anti-Semitic and anti-banking radio diatribes, Senator Joseph McCarthy's red-baiting speeches and publications, George Wallace's racially coded populist rhetoric to modern day players including media personalities Ann Coulter, Michael Savage, Rush Limbaugh and the presidential candidates of 2016 particularly Bernie Sanders, and, of course, Donald Trump.

Rhetorical populism becomes a particularly potent political force at times of social change and economic transition. Given the widely acknowledged disconnect between worker productivity and wages in the United States which resulted virtually flat constant-dollar wages since 1973 despite major increases in productivity, it could be said that those who believe "that the system is unfairly rigged in favor of elites" have reasonable grounds for their views. That political rhetoric would exploit suppressed frustrations with nationalist sloganeering, and hostility toward the *bête noirs* of international trade, environmental protection and immigration should not be surprising. What is new, however, is an evolving media environment which reinforces the phenomenon of polarization. National network nightly news and traditional models of balanced journalistic practice have given way to talk radio bombast and explicitly partisan broadcast networks.

The study concludes that although the themes of "putting the people first" and "distrust of elites" resonate as before, their growing impact on day-to-day political practice and public policy in industrial democracies raises renewed concerns.

Screening right-wing populism in “new Turkey”: Neo-Ottomanism, historical dramas and the case of Payitaht Abdulhamid

Ergin Bulut & Nurcin Ileri

Koc University & Bosphorus University

ebulut@ku.edu.tr

Turkey’s governing AKP has been in power since 2002. However, the party had problems in establishing hegemony in the realms of education and culture during their uninterrupted tenure. Acutely aware of the vitality of media and popular culture for achieving political hegemony in the polarized context of Turkey, the governing party patiently built its own partisan media (Yesil 2016). Yet, this partisan media network has not been sufficient on its own, leading to legal restrictions of Internet freedom (Bulut 2016; Yeşil, Sözeri, and Khazraee 2017; Koçer 2015; Tunç 2015) as well as systematic trolling on Twitter (Bulut and Yoruk 2017). In its quest for cultural hegemony, the government finally resorted to the production of historical dramas that are “real” as opposed to the “fictional” ones that are full of “inaccuracies” – such as the Magnificent Century. In this talk, we are not interested in a debate between “real” and “fake” history. Our motivation to analyze the recent TV series Payitaht Abdulhamid stems from our interest in the instrumental mobilization of popular culture for the government’s dual desire to both establish cultural hegemony and consolidate its populist style of government. We define populism as a thin-centered ideology that divides the society into two groups – the corrupt elite and the people – and approaches politics as “the general will of the people” (Mudde 2004). For populism to exist, there has to be an articulation of people’s unsatisfied political demands. A populist leader brings together “the underdogs” and constructs them as “the people” against “the elite” (Laclau 2005). In this process, leaders’ media performances play a crucial role (Moffitt 2016). Our examination of Payitaht Abdulhamid demonstrates that television, especially in the Global South, still plays a central role for governments’ desire to reconstruct history and establish cultural hegemony. This is particularly important as Turkey is going through a crisis of hegemony since the public is completely divided in its support for the government. Within the context of this hegemonic crisis, televised popular culture is vital, perhaps more than ever. Specifically, the show reduces a complicated history into easily understandable dichotomies and projects them on contemporary politics in order to consolidate support for the government. Through televised popular culture, the government mobilizes history for purposes of cultural hegemony and populist politics flavored with nationalist, Islamist, and anti-Western motifs. Ultimately, the TV show presents yet another moment for understanding the mediated nature of 21st century politics outside Western contexts.

Neoliberalism, Progressivism, and their Critique in Populist US Media

John McMurria

University of San Diego

jmcmurria@gmail.com

Scholars have recognized the online news site Breitbart as the most prominent source for right-wing populism in the US. Its Executive Chairman Steve Bannon, who oversaw Donald Trump's presidential campaign and served as his White House Chief Strategist, has promoted economic nationalism through curbs to immigration and free trade, and defended working people against what he calls an elitist establishment. Studies have shown that Breitbart articles far surpass other right-wing media, and most traditional media, in their circulation on social media. Critics of Breitbart find it to promote the racist, misogynist and xenophobic perspectives of the white supremacist alt-right. Scholars have expressed concern that the site's polarizing views and attacks on the integrity and professionalism of traditional news media threaten liberal consensus values and pluralism that are the shared foundation of democracy.

This paper considers the political space of Breitbart in relation to understandings of populist politics. Following Chantal Mouffe's perspectives on populism, I question depictions of Breitbart as a political space that threatens democratic norms. Mouffe argues that the emergence of right-wing populism is a result of the triumph of a predominantly liberal interpretation of democracy that subordinates the democratic traditions of popular sovereignty and equality to the liberal norms of individual liberty and pluralism. In valuing "good governance" and "non-partisan democracy," the liberal consensus, Mouffe writes, fails to provide political alternatives for those marginalized in liberal government, leaving right-wing leaders space to champion popular sovereignty against liberal elites. This call to better distinguish liberal traditions from democratic theory is further elaborated by Jacques Rancière who theorizes democracy as a logic that challenges hierarchies, including those within liberal government that presuppose the superior participatory qualifications of those who hold pluralist values or expert credentials.

Drawing from a year-long study of Breitbart with attention to the extensive comments of Breitbart readers, the most prevalent themes included critiques of neoliberal and progressive forms of government. The former included attacks on "globalists" for prioritizing free trade and open immigration that was viewed as favoring transnational business over working people. These neoliberal critiques also opposed US wars in the Middle East for servicing globalist agendas. Commenters critiqued progressivism for subordinating Christian beliefs and economic opportunity to multicultural values, and labeling Trump voters as ignorant and bigoted. These critiques of neoliberalism and progressivism existed alongside alt-right posts of cultural and biological racism and anti-Semitism, which were often critiqued as racist and counter-productive to challenging neoliberalism and progressivism. The paper concludes with thoughts on how the antielitism that runs through these neoliberal and progressive critiques are only amplified through calls for neoliberal or progressive values, and that challenges to racism and xenophobia, and middle and working class economic stagnation, must engage on the democratic terrain of popular sovereignty and equality.

Is it a shoe? Populism as a special form of hybrid communication”: a proposal of systems theory**Orsolya Rakai**Research Center for the Humanities of Hungarian Academy of Sciences
rakai.orsolya@btk.mta.edu

According to the famous words of Isaiah Berlin about the „Cinderella complex”, there should exist a foot which fits the shoe, but in the light of recent research it seems to be more and more arguable whether it's about a reassuring story of fitting and recognition. It's difficult to define populism as a political tendency, program or even ideology, although the latter provides some fruitful insights: populism as so-called „thin ideology” without real political program (e.g. Ben Stanley, Cas Mudde) or as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite” (Cas Mudde) or ‘a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers’ (Kurt Weyland) share some important characteristics with media theoretical approaches.

In my paper, I would like to argue that recent populism should be distinguished from earlier political populism of 20th century and conceived as a special hybrid form of communication under conditions of global and mediatized society. I invoke the mass media term of Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory assuming that it could connect the social, political and communicational dimensions of populism. Luhmann's constructivist theory is based on the proposition that human society consists of communicative acts during which distinctions are drawn in order to gain informations. Differentiating between the marked and the unmarked state create boundaries between systems and environments where environment is an infinitely complex and thus inconceivable exterior. Aim of systems is to reduce this complexity, but paradoxically all distinctions make the world more and more complex. Luhmann describes this process historically as social evolution. The modern society is global and internally differentiated into functionally specialised subsystems which operate on the basis of specific binary codes.

One of these subsystems is the modern mass media which „guarantee all function systems a present which is accepted throughout society and is familiar to individuals, and which they can take as given when it is a matter of selecting a system-specific past and establishing decisions about future expectations important to the system” (Luhmann). Mass media doesn't convey or distort the „reality” but constructs it, on the base its own rules. If a subsystem (e.g. economics, science, art or politics) wants to have a present (and an overall presence) in the society, it has to work out a media-compatible self-description which is highly reductive. During this reductive process they lose their original dual structure of roles (agents/patients, active/passive poles) which appears as a quasi-democratic, „anti-élite” interpretation of the given system. However, it doesn't mean real emancipatory, politic actions as these actions happen in the realm and in control of mass media which maintains its own dual role structure and specific binary code. To illustrate this, I take a brief example of recent Facebook-activism compared to political activism (with Facebook-presence) in Hungary.

Mediatization and Networked Populism: Critical Conceptualization of Media Populism

Nikola Mlađenović

University of Belgrade

nmladjenovic@yahoo.com

This paper reconstructs the concept of media populism by showing its sociological deficit. I will base my argument on Mazzoleni's and Kramer's understanding of media populism, draw the connections with mediatization theory and introduce the idea of networked populism.

Mediatization is understood as a contribution to social theory (Couldry 2014). It is the interplay of media-communication and socio-cultural change. Unfortunately, scholars rarely follow this definition. Mediatization is often seen merely as a theory of media influence on society, while the interplay is mostly ignored. But if the interrelationship becomes the focus of the theory, things start to look different.

Mazzoleni (2014: 42) says media and society have become an “interdependent entity”, but this changes when he defines media populism as a connecting point between media logic and phenomenon of populism (Ibid: 47). Page later, “media logic and media populism appear to be somewhat overlapping concepts” (Ibid: 48). There is no interplay.

Populism is “a reaction to the dramatic transformations wrought by globalization which challenge existing power balances, prosperity levels, economic indices and labor models” (Ibid: 45). Populism is a reaction to a social malaise that is “certainly not provoked by the media” (Mazzoleni 2008: 50), but Mazzoleni doesn't see the media are affected by the same malaise. Mazzoleni knows other structural factors foster populism, but doesn't acknowledge these factors influence the media, too.

Kramer's view is even more problematic. He states that tabloid logic is “conducive of populism by fostering a sentiment of crisis, insecurity and social tensions, (while) quality media seem to be more committed to the existing institutions” (2014: 50). But if those institutions are the creators of malaise, being committed to them produces ignorant media professionalism.

If media populism is defined by certain “stylistic and ideological elements” (Ibid: 48), why would those be only tabloid elements? That is not the only connection of media and populism. By professionally ignoring the social malaise in the context of political parallelism or ownership structure, quality media may pave the way for tabloids, whose populist rhetoric is “impossible in official political context” (Ibid: 49)

Where is the interplay? If mediatization, therefore media populism, seeks affirmation as a socio-theoretical tool, it actually has to explain what model of society researchers should use. Networked populism has to acknowledge the interplay of society and media on many levels.

First, if political and economic institutions created the malaise, how did it affect the media? Second, if quality media are committed to these institutions, how did they respond to the malaise? Third, have the audience found media's coverage of the malaise inadequate? Fourth, have quality media fostered populism by not tackling properly with the malaise? Fifth, was populism already there before tabloids? Sixth, if populist schema substitutes class conflicts (Kramer 2014: 44), are tabloids really independent from political and economic institutions? Or they play a specific role of neutralizing the real alternative?

These questions don't exhaust all the networking possibilities, but show that the interplay has to be the most pertinent term for media populism research.

A computational analysis of media coverage and online conversations around a populist candidate in Brazil

Alexandre Gonçalves

Columbia University

a.goncalves@columbia.edu

Among current Brazilian presidential candidates, one politician wields an unmistakable populist appeal: Representative Jair Bolsonaro. He is the epitome of a right-wing Latin American populist if we adopt Mudde and Kaltwasser's definition of populism: "a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people".

Although he has been a national representative since 1991, he spares no effort to present himself as an outsider in a political system plagued by corruption scandals. Like most populists, he chastises economic and cultural elites for imposing their alleged political correctness on people. He delights in outraging the media and academia with statements like: "I'd rather see my son dead than coming out" or "The main mistake of the dictatorship [in the 70's] was to torture people without killing them".

In accordance with the populist playbook, he criticizes the political establishment for not embracing common folk wisdom. For instance, his three-fold prescription for public security is anything but complex: armed citizenry, torture-assisted interrogations, and death penalty. Such recipe resonates with large swaths of the electorate beset by high rates of violent crime. He also revels in macho posturing, a staple of Latin American populists. He notoriously said to a female opponent in Congress that she was not worth raping because she was too ugly.

Undoubtedly, Bolsonaro would be just an eccentric and marginal figure in a turbulent run-up to the 2018 elections, were it not for his surprising prominence in recent polls: he comes second in several projections.

This study aims at analyzing the media discourse around Bolsonaro and the accompanying conversation on social media since he announced his decision to run for president. Using computational methods, a comprehensive corpus will be created with all online articles about his candidacy since March 2016. Subsequently, the reaction to those articles on Facebook and Twitter will be collected via APIs to help determine the most influential pieces. Content analysis will be performed on those pieces to identify the most important frames and voices around his candidacy. Moreover, the study of social media reaction will likely offer insights on how – despite heavy criticism from cultural and political establishments – he has managed to find growing support among middle-class Brazilians.

New populist media personalities as “false prophets”?

D. B. Kejanlioğlu, O. Taş, T. Taş, S. C. Yağcı-Aksel, M. Yergebekov, K. Polynczuk-Alenius

Giresun University & University of Ankara & Suleyman Demirel & University of Helsinki

dilekbeybin@gmail.com

The West versus the East, the North versus the South, and the West versus the Islam have been among the main hierarchical dichotomies that have been dominating our understanding of the world politics. Yet such dichotomies have also penetrated into our everyday lives, perhaps determining the cultural and political standing we have vis-a-vis others in the form of the pure versus the hybrid, us versus them/the enemy. The main question posed in this presentation is whether such currently popular terms as “post-truth”, “populism”, “new racism” should remind us the world of late 1930s, the 1940s and aftermath with all the conceptual tools of the time or do they point to an entirely new current that creates new polarizations? If one reconsiders all those assumptions and findings of early socio-psychological research and analyses of radio talks by Theodor W. Adorno (2000) and Leo Lowenthal (1987) in the 1940s America, can s/he now find parallels with the use of the new media by new media personalities (perhaps to be called as unofficial spokespersons of the political leaders) in the US, Russia, Hungary, Poland and Turkey?

Thus, this presentation aims at comparing and contrasting early research on authoritarianism and anti-Semitism, especially the radio addresses of “false prophets” (Lowenthal 1987) with the discourse of new media personalities in terms of the themes and techniques/devices/tricks that we derived from the analyses of the agitators’ radio addresses by Adorno (originally 1943 -2000), and Lowenthal and Guterman (1949). These are: (1) ambiguous self-portrait/self-characterization; (2) emphasis on home, “endogamic community” (nation, religion)/“unity” trick; (3) problem -“social malaise”: hostile world, either-or world, conspiracy, threat; (4) lists of enemies (Reds/communists, bankers/plutocrats, corrupt government/President-baiting, Jews, foreigner-refugees); (5) ambiguous portraits of the enemy (ruthless yet helpless, parasite, luxurious, etc.); and (6) solution: stimulation of envy, hate, aggression, call for violence, defeat/extermination of the enemy.

This presentation will supply only the preliminary findings of a larger project: here, only five figures from five countries will be taken into account: (1) Zsolt Bayer from Hungary, (2) Jacek Międlar from Poland (3) Andrei Babitsky from Russia, (4) Cem Küçük from Turkey, and (5) Nicholas Fuentes from the US.

Being aware of the fact that Nazi experience is unique and such analyses were the result of historically specific conditions. Eight decades later of this experience that led to a “total war” or great destruction and that the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research had to flee from Europe to the US, what can be said about the world, nations and power? About technology, will and truth? We wish this research would contribute adding a crucial component to the recent discussions on populism; i.e., authoritarianism.

References:

Adorno, T. (2000) *The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas’ Radio Addresses*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lowenthal, L. (1987) *False Prophets*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Inc.

Lowenthal, L., and N. Guterman (1949) *Prophets of Deceit: A Study of the Techniques of the American Agitator*. New York: Harper & Brothers.

Keywords:

political and cultural leaders, false prophets, populism, comparative analysis, Hungary, Russia, Turkey, the US

Cyprus: a missing link in the chain of European Populism

Giorgos Venizelos

Scuola Normale Superiore

george.venizelos@sns.it

This paper investigates the absence of emerging populist parties in Cypriot politics in the context of the ongoing economic recession and the populist surge in Europe. Unlike most of its counterparts then, Cyprus consists a missing link in the chain of European populism. A burgeoning literature stresses the inextricable relationship between populism and 'crisis'. Although the severity of the economic crisis in Cyprus led to a representational crisis, neither a (pre-)established nor a newly emerged political actor managed to fill the political space that had opened. Despite the austerity measures being imposed since 2011, the rise in youth unemployment, and the frequently uncovered corruption scandals – conditions that populists in Europe appropriated – the incumbent Right government has not been challenged.

Applying discourse analysis methodology on textual and audio-visual material, party manifestos, televised and written interviews as well as tweets by the main political parties and key political figures are considered. Drawing on the minimal definition of populism as a discourse that juxtaposes a positively valorised people against a negatively valorised elite, the paper evaluates critically the performative dynamics of the Cypriot parties and their attempts to construct a collective subject against a symbolised political enemy.

Findings show that no party adopted a sharp populist strategy. Attempts to construct "the people" are assessed as weak and inconsistent, while the perceived role parties play in public life places them rather on the establishment's side. Taking into account the complex history of ethnic conflict in Cyprus, it is exposed that the hegemony of the ethnic understanding of "the people" in political discourses and the difficulty in staging a historically consistent collective subject renders difficult the possibilities in constructing a community with civic demands. This research contributes to the populist studies literature by focusing on a negative case, and especially in a country that received little scholarly attention. Its findings contribute to the debate between the populism/nationalism nexus by showing how historical conditions can be both an obstacle for certain types of populisms and a vehicle for others.

Populism: The Maleficent Management of Public Fear from Terror

Eszter Kiss

Corvinus University of Budapest
eszter.kiss92@gmail.com

Terrorism is not a new phenomenon, not unknown or unique and not even for Western societies. During the 20th century Europe and the Western world have faced several manifestations of terrorism, for instance bombings of IRA, ETA or the events of the Olympic Games 1972. In spite of that 11 September 2001 changed permanently the discourse of terrorism in the West. There is a library of academic and journalistic literature how terrorism has been redefined to become seemingly inseparable from Islamic fanaticism.

In this paper I would argue that we are witnessing a similarly significant shift in public discourses about terrorism, which originates from 9/11 and gets immensely fuelled by the recent rise of populism. Current political debates in a country with populist governance are more about the social and political tensions within the society in question than about terrorism itself. Since populist political actors rather intensify these tensions by mongering public anxieties, this is a distressing development.

Populist governments today incline to manage public fear from terror professionally and direct it precisely to a certain target to gain immediate political advantages. Paradoxically, measures that should be the most unpopular in a democratic society (such as limiting rights of certain social groups, propagating surveillance of citizens or heavy and costly border control) are frequently practised moves of the populist toolkit. These harsh responses to terrorism were initially triggered by 9/11 and have become the new norm by today.

As an empirical background of this argument comparative research is implemented by close reading of political speeches as initial and thereby regarded as most influential official political reactions to major terrorist attacks. Speeches of Viktor Orbán, Hungarian Prime Minister; speeches of the political leaders of countries attacked on 11 September 2001 (USA, World Trade Center), 7 January 2015 (France, Charlie Hebdo) and 13 November 2015 (France, Bataclan) and speeches of a third country leader, that is not attacked at that moment but is potentially at remarkable risk of Islam fanatic terrorism (Germany), will be analysed.

The main research question is what the key messages of these speeches are. Furthermore it will be reviewed how much they differ as almost 15 years have passed? What are the central expressions and characteristics of the language they use? What core values do they refer to? Do they propose unity or division among social groups? What kind of measures do they urge?

In this way it can be examined whether Viktor Orbán, who is one of the most prominent populists among East-Central European leaders today, has modified his attitude in connection with terrorism during these years. Secondly, this inquiry could offer an insight into what language is used by country leaders, when they are attacked (USA, France), when a government is rather interested in mitigating social tensions because of a higher potentiality of future attacks (Germany) and when populism flourishes (Hungary) and there is a relatively low risk of occurring terrorist attacks.

Populist Preconditions: Media Investments in Defining the People

Kate Zambon

University of New Hampshire

kate.zambon@unh.edu

The rise of rightwing populist parties in established democracies across the globe has elicited considerable shock in the mediated public sphere, where narratives of the linear social progress promised by liberal democracy predominate. This prompts questions of whether populist exuberance is a rupture from normality or something more. This case study goes beyond the confines of party populism to ask how the current moment of populist upheaval relates to contemporary mainstream political and media discourse. What are some of the conceptual preconditions for populism that have been cultivated in the course of relatively normal politics and public discourse in recent history?

To explore these questions, this study analyzes a self-described “integration campaign” created by the Association of German Periodical Publishers and the German government in 2010. This print campaign featured photographs of prominent minority citizens sticking out their tongues, which were digitally painted with the colors of the national flag to indicate their ability to speak German. The campaign, which is meant “to encourage immigrants to learn German,” argues that speaking the language properly is the key to an effective life in Germany. This study uses visual and discourse analysis to examine the print advertisements and the campaign theme song. It also analyzes press coverage of the campaign and its theme song to investigate how the campaign was interpreted in the mainstream media. Although the stated intent of the campaign is integrative, the campaign fragments the population into normative Germans and perpetual “migrants.” This study argues that media narratives about language form a key part of the populist background: the set of norms defining “the people” and legitimate forms of national life. The populist undercurrents in this campaign are made explicit in the campaign theme song by Black German rapper, Harris, who argues that immigrants who do not “behave” and appreciate their place in Germany should go back where they came from.

As John Judis (2016) has argued, while the left appeals to the people against the elites, the right appeals to the “real” people against the elites primarily because they coddle a third group: usually immigrants or other minorities. At first blush, this campaign appears to be a case of media elites supporting this third group. However, closer analysis shows an alignment with rightwing populist ideals of individualism, anti-institutionalism, and responsabilization. More fundamentally, it supports the conflation of all minorities with immigrants, in contrast to normative white Germans. Rather than supporting forms of difference and pluralism against which rightwing populists bristle, this campaign celebrates those who overcome difference to achieve normality. This reconstitutes the core population of “ordinary” people while also maintaining the appearance of tolerance necessary to make such normalization palatable to a mainstream audience. This campaign exemplifies how the media at large contribute to the “climate of opinion” (Krämer 2014) that is a precondition for populism: the commonsense and natural idea of who constitutes “the people” as well as a definition of what qualifies as politically relevant forms of national life.

**After all this is a democracy... and the people have spoken”: Populist Discourses in New Zealand
Media Debates on Racism**

Elena Maydell, Keith Tuffin and Eleanor Brittain

Massey University

E.Maydell@massey.ac.nz

Drawing on Laclau's (1996) conceptualisation of an empty signifier, this research investigates how such notions as 'democracy' and 'equality' were contested in debates on racism in New Zealand media and further deployed to promote a populist agenda against the representation of the indigenous minority in the local government. While populism is commonly considered antagonistic to democratic liberalism, recent research on manifestations of populism indicates the blurring of the boundaries between the two, with populist rhetoric high-jacking traditional liberal discourses, in order to suppress differences and reject pluralism (Moffitt, 2017). One of the main sites of social struggle, media has the pervasive power to construct and dispense social knowledge (Matheson, 2005), and plays a crucial role in setting the agenda for discussing social problems and providing space for voicing public opinion, for example via letters to the Editor.

This research analyses racism debates in New Zealand media, following the attempt of former Mayor Andrew Judd to establish a Māori ward on the District Council of New Plymouth, a provincial city in Aotearoa New Zealand with a population of 55,000. The 2015 public referendum subsequently quashed his initiative, with 83 percent voting against it. In the interview to a TVNZ programme, *Seven Sharp*, in 2016, Andrew Judd announced that he would not stand for re-election as Mayor due to the racial abuse he had experienced while promoting Māori representation. In the wake of the interview, he received a lot of support on national and social media, but it caused another backlash against him from people in New Plymouth, who resisted being labelled as racists.

The current study looks at the debates in the New Plymouth regional newspaper, *The Taranaki Daily News*, in response to Judd's interview. The analysis of letters to the Editor shows the prevalence of anti-Judd and anti-Māori sentiment, indicating the newspaper's practice of giving voice to the majority opinion. The notions of democracy, equality and democratic rights were harnessed by many anti-Judd writers who presented themselves as defenders of democracy, while reaffirming the cultural politics of white dominance, articulated through such populist rhetoric as 'majority', 'whole community' and 'togetherness'; while Judd's appeal for Māori representation was framed as 'special treatment', 'positive discrimination', 'separatism' and 'institutional racism'. These examples unpack the public sentiment that explains the grounds on which a populist agenda is built and how such signifiers as democracy and equality can be opportunistically refashioned against the plight of minorities. The findings demonstrate that racist and divisive rhetoric may be disguised as liberal and egalitarian discourses, which provides further evidence towards the argument equating populism with democratic illiberalism (Pappas, 2016). The pro-Judd and pro-Māori position, though present in some letters, was not as vocal, and conveyed the overall sense of the failure of democracy, framed as the 'tyranny of the majority'. This points to the newspaper's general indifference to, or deliberate avoidance of, investigating any alternatives to racist rhetoric, leaving us with a question: How to advance the emancipatory discourses on liberal values in mainstream media, in order to promote social justice and democratic ideas in contemporary society?

Populism in Scandinavian Immigration Discourse 1970-2016

Hilmar Mjelde, Jostein Gripsud & Jan Fredrik Hovden
University of Bergen
hilmar.mjelde@uib.no

Both anecdotal evidence and recent research suggest that Denmark, Norway and Sweden, in spite of all of their similarities and close historical ties, have had strikingly different public discourses on the issue of immigration, with relatively restrictive and liberal discourses in Sweden and Denmark, respectively, with Norway in a middle position. This article provides an overview and analysis of the presence and varieties of populism in public discourse on immigration in Scandinavia from 1970 to 2016, based on new, comparative, and systematic data collected for these years by the SCANPUB project*. The data consists of all items related to immigration in a total of seven newspapers from the three countries over four constructed weeks for each of the forty-seven years under study, in total ca. 6000 coded newspaper articles covering 5640 newspaper days. We find that (...)”

Construction of National Identity Through The Rhetorics of Fear in the Hungarian Government's Anti-Refugee Campaigns

Reka Gal

reka.p.gal@gmail.com

The recent decades of upsurge in global Islamophobia have provided a fertile ground for creating narratives of fear about the increasing number of refugees and immigrants around the world. Several political parties have used the topic as an electioneering platform. Since 2015, the Fidesz-KDNP coalition of the Hungarian government has been using populist tactics to campaign against refugees in the country. This coalition deployed a National Consultation about Immigration and Terrorism and a referendum on the refugee quota, both of which were accompanied by billboard campaigns. These campaigns presented refugees and immigrants as a threat to the people of Hungary, and framed the government as the only institution keeping the needs and safety of Hungarians in mind – thus fostering a populist and anti-EU sentiment.

The aim of this paper is to provide a theoretical framework for a comprehensive conceptual understanding of this process. In order to do this, I will conduct an analysis of the specific rhetorics and forms of these campaigns, and also theorize their implications for the affected social groups. I assert that the rhetorics of these campaigns construct a narrative border between groups of the collective – between 'Us' and 'Them'. The rhetorical devices used rely on evoking a sense of belonging in the voter base through distinguishing it from the dangerous 'Other', while presenting the specific political parties as the only actors capable of defending the nation against the external threat. These actions demonstrate a complicated web of social control that correlates with political science scholar Jacques Sémelin's theory on political violence, namely the first stage of the massacious process, the public rhetorics that lead to violent tendencies in communities: the imaginaire of fear. In his book *Purify and Destroy* (2007), Sémelin demonstrates how imaginary constructs of identity and fear have throughout history been used by social and political actors to incite the people's support of certain political parties so as to seize political power.

I will conduct a close examination of the Hungarian national consultation of 2015 and the 2016 referendum on the European refugee quota system, as well as two recent billboard campaigns (2015 and 2016) against refugees and immigrants, along with the subsequent propaganda billboards against George Soros, and connect their propagated ideologies to the system of rhetorical devices Sémelin argues constitute the imaginaire of fear. The goal of this paper is to provide a conceptual understanding of the political process behind these campaigns, so as to show the possible implications of the Hungarian government's rhetorics, in the hopes that the clear correlation between Sémelin's findings of the populist rhetorics employed before the massacres in Rwanda, Bosnia, and Germany, and the Hungarian billboard campaigns will bring scholarly attention to the dangers of the recurring 'Us' against 'Them' rhetorics currently prevalent in many countries.

Populism and Popular Media in Eastern Europe

Anikó Imre

University of Southern California

Imre@usc.edu

All of Europe has been steadily moving to the right as the economic and political crises of the past 15-20 years have dimmed the dream of a unified, expanded post-Cold War Europe. At the same time, the historical divide between east and west, recast along somewhat different lines as center and periphery, has also unmistakably re-emerged. One characteristic of this divide that has received little analysis so far is the specific history of the relationship between popular entertainment media and populist news media in the postsocialist peripheries.

In the immediate post-socialist decades of global opening and digital explosion, scholars looked hopefully towards the potential of diverse media content to erode parochial, ethnocentric and nationalistic ideologies. However, the widespread access to transnational media has not appeared to stem the rise of right-wing populism and xenophobia in these parts. This presentation explores the reasons for and implications of this divergence between popular media and populist nationalistic sentiment. I discuss the shifts in the entertainment media landscape media-political landscape in relation to the rise of populist nationalism in Eastern Europe, taking into account historical legacies, ambivalent or discriminatory EU media policies, the role of linguistic isolation, and of high-cultural elitism.

At a time when the economy, finance, culture, and certainly the media have never been more globally integrated, when EU media policy has trended strongly towards commercialization, deregulation, convergence and concentration, neo-authoritarian parties in Russia, Poland, Hungary and elsewhere have been successfully consolidating national media empires among their faithful oligarchic networks. These resemble and build on socialist structures in many respects. They include television channels, local and national print media and internet news sites, and are not unlike late socialist media networks in their structure and politics. Through accumulating economic power, concentrating ownership and silencing opposition, they have been able to institute control and even censorship, ensuring the uniformity of news, spreading fake news and shrinking access to alternative news through extensive national media campaigns that are developed in international cooperation with offshore, international right-wing media firms that work in regional cooperation.

This return to an authoritarian, centralized news media infrastructure is surprising, especially considering that the same strategies of political centralization, propaganda and censorship had actually grown ineffective by the late socialist period of the 1970s-80s in much of the region in the face of widespread distrust among audiences. As a result, socialist parties shifted some of their propaganda efforts to popular entertainment culture, most notably to fictional TV serials. In the past decade or so, while public television has returned to political propaganda, transnational companies have taken over some of the functions of public service broadcasting. I briefly zoom in on the role that HBO Europe's more diverse, liberal and Europe-facing program production has played (or has failed to play) in opposing the populist wave.

The Personalization of Populism: Populist Rhetoric of Individual Political Actors

Naama Weiss Yaniv

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

naama.weiss@mail.huji.ac.il

Existing research and theory on populism tend to focus on the level of political parties. In light of personalization trends in politics, this study shifts the focus to the individual political actors themselves and examines the degree of homogeneity in their populist rhetoric both within and across parties as well as the factors that shape the level of populism in their political rhetoric. Using a content analysis of Facebook posts published by Israeli parliament members, I show that degrees of variance in populist rhetoric between parties are not significantly greater than within parties. I also show that the levels of populist rhetoric are contingent on some of the actor's individual characteristics.

The literature on populist parties is based on an implicit assumption that actors who belong to the same party act in a similar manner. Hence, most studies on populist rhetoric tend to examine communicative features of parties or party leaders or to group the data on individual actors to a party level (e.g., Bos & Brants, 2014; Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2009; Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017). Yet, the theory of personalization attributes a growing role to individual actors and assumes that politicians are less likely to be "team players" and more inclined to act in an individualistic manner (Balmas, Rahat, Sheafer, & Shenhav, 2014). This leads to the study's first research question: Is the level of variance of populist rhetoric by political actors between parties greater than within parties? Following Jagers and Walgrave (2007), I distinguish between two types of populism – anti-elitist populism and exclusionary populism – and examine this question from both perspectives.

The second research question deals with the conditions that affect the use of populist rhetoric by individual political actors. I examine the relationship between their distance from political power and their levels of anti-elitist and exclusionary populist rhetoric. Based on the literature on populism, as well as theories from the fields of political science and political communication, it is hypothesized that the closer actors are to political power, the less populist rhetoric they employ.

To examine the above questions, I analyzed 3,024 posts from the Facebook pages of 80 Israeli members of parliament. The posts were analyzed quantitatively using a codebook aimed to identify whether each post entails anti-elitist and/or exclusionary populism. A score of each actor's populist rhetoric (of each type separately) was calculated as a percentage of populist posts out of the total amount of his/her sampled posts.

The most significant finding was that contrary to the implied premise of most of the literature on populism, variance in populist rhetoric levels between parties is not significantly greater than within parties. Moreover, for both types of populism, party affiliation only partly accounts for the variance in populist rhetoric of politicians. Considering the factors that affect the use of populist rhetoric by individual actors, I found some evidence demonstrating that distance from political power is related to higher degrees of both anti-elitist populism and exclusionary populism.

This paper highlights the need to pay attention to individual actors when studying populism and to individual-level factors that affect populist rhetoric. While the study is limited in its focus to Israeli actors, the framework suggested here can be employed as a basis for future cross-national investigations of the level of homogeneity of populist rhetoric within parties and the factors shaping the use of populist rhetoric.

References

Balmas, M., Rahat, G., Sheaffer, T., & Shenhav, S. R. (2014). Two routes to personalized politics: Centralized and decentralized personalization. *Party Politics*, 20(1), 37-51.

Bos, L., & Brants, K. (2014). Populist rhetoric in politics and media: A longitudinal study of the Netherlands. *European Journal of Communication*, 29(6), 703-719.

Deegan-Krause, K. & Haughton, T. (2009). Toward a more useful conceptualization of populism: Types and degrees of populist appeals in the case of Slovakia. *Politics & Policy*, 37(4), 821-841.

Ernst, N., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., Blassnig, S., & Esser, F. (2017). Extreme parties and populism: an analysis of Facebook and Twitter across six countries. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(9), 1347-1364.

Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46(3), 319-345.

Left and right populism in the North and South A comparative study of Spanish and Swedish populist parties' political communication styles

Karen Arriaza Ibarra & Lars. W. Nord

Universidad Complutense de Madrid & Mid Sweden University
arriazaibarra@ccinf.ucm.es

Recent parliamentary elections around Europe have generally resulted in significantly increased voters' support for political parties that may be characterized as populist with regard to their ideology and/or their dominant political messages during the campaign. The number of parliamentary seats for populist parties is now larger than ever before and the positive opinion trends for populist parties are distinctive features of many European countries regardless of their political tradition, media systems, voters' demographics or domestic political culture. Variations of populism have arisen on both the right and the left political ideologies and have surfaced in a variety of political systems and traditions.

This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of populism styles of political communication during election campaigns by comparing the two very different cases of Spain and Sweden. Left and right-wing populist parties campaign styles are compared during the latest national election campaigns in both countries. The study compares political communication styles of populist parties both referring to both: 1) campaign messages (content) and 2) their use of professional and digital tools and practices (structure). The comparison of populist parties' campaign styles in Spain and Sweden is intended to address the relative importance of both ideological orientation and country-specific characteristics for populist political communication and shed new light on the underexplored communicative aspects of populism.

The paper contributes to the ongoing discussion of possible explanations to the rise and success of populist parties in Europe. Thus, the comparison of populist party communications in Spain and Sweden are related to macroeconomic factors (such as recession and unemployment), political and societal issues (such as migration and environment), the different levels of political trust, voters' behaviour and media systems in each country.

In Spain there will be a special focus on the left-wing 'Podemos' and the right-wing, also recently formed, 'Ciudadanos'.

In Sweden there will be an analysis of the left-wing 'Feminist Party' and the right-wing 'Sweden Democrats'.

Viral Stories in Mainstream News: A populist redefinition of newsworthiness**Rachel E Khan**

University of Philippines

rekhan2@up.edu.ph

From a century to a decade ago, mass media institutions and organizations were solely responsible for defining ‘what is news’ and/or ‘what is newsworthy.’ Media practitioners have been guided with normative journalistic values such as timeliness, significance and prominence. These days, Social Media, which thrives on user-generated content and the ease with which information is shared, is changing this paradigm.

The phenomenon of Viral News, i.e. viral stories on social media platforms, has emerged in the mainstream mediascape as legitimate news items. Using Walter Ong’s concept of secondary orality and David Manning White’s gatekeeping theory as its framework, this study looked into the newsroom process by which viral stories/content have become part of mainstream news. A content analysis of viral news from 2016 and 2017 showed that viral news (especially in the Philippines and Indonesia) varied from important events such as fire incidents and political protests to everyday trivialities, similar to that of community gossip. Majority of these so-called viral stories largely ignore or bypass traditional news values of Journalism. The study also interviewed online editors of mainstream media to determine their rationale for including viral stories in their news feeds.

Bodies of Leaders: Populism, Power, Resistance

Marwan M. Kraidy

University of Pennsylvania

marwan.kraidy@asc.upenn.edu

The body of the leader is one of the most pervasive yet under-studied instruments of populism. By attacking the elites, bashing the media, and proclaiming the unity (and imagined racial, ethnic homogeneity) of the people, the populist leader establishes an “unmediated” relationship with the people, for whom he—for it has mostly been a he—speaks. The populist leader speaks “in the name of the people”, which, scholars of nationalism and constitutive rhetoric have told us, is a potent political gambit that leads to drastic changes in political systems—from new constitutions to systemic breakdowns. The populist leader thus embodies the will of the people.

In this paper, I will argue that understanding the corporal symbolism of the leader is key to understanding what I call populism’s “articulation of resentments”— against women, ethnic and sexual minorities, migrants, Others. This takes us back to medieval doctrines of the body politic, mostly famously synthesized by Ernst Kantorowicz, in which the body of the king was both biological corpus but also the sacred, political, body of the nation. The French Marxist phenomenologist Claude Lefort has argued compellingly that the logic of the body politic, in which the body of the leader sutures the unity of the nation, still played a key role in the authoritarian polities of the 20th century.

This position paper synthesizing two strains of research, the first on bodily metaphor and symbolism in politics (particularly the phenomenology of Merleau- Ponty and Claude Lefort, but also the biopolitics of Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben), the second on populism (Ernesto Laclau, Etienne Balibar, Jan-Werner Müller), to argue for the centrality of the body of the leader in the ongoing global populist wave, as a key nexus of the popular and the political.

Preoccupation with Putin’s bare-chested horse riding, Trump’s hand size and Boris Johnson’s hairdo; satires of Erdogan’s sexual predilection for goats, controversy over a golden King Bibi statue in Israel, pop celebrations of Sisi’s sexual prowess in Egypt, holographic appearances of Modi in political rallies in India, and Chavez’s zany media performances in Venezuela, among others, showcase how the re-centering the body of the leader in the national and transnational politics of the 21st century has entered new circuits of culture enabled by digital media to take a privileged space in public discourse. Through circulation and affirmation, the leader’s super-male body trumps political institutions, public deliberations, and expertise of all kinds, and attempts to establish itself as the single source of truth and identity—at the expense of gendered, sexual, ethnic, racial and national others. But just as the proliferation of digital media has created new opportunities for populist leaders to project their bodies in public space in the name of the people, so has the new media environment enabled myriad opportunities for opposition and subversion of the body of the leader through critique, dissent and satire. Using selected vignettes from populist leaders worldwide, this paper takes a deliberately global and comparative approach in order to identify similarities and variations across contexts.

The Construction of Charisma: Modi and Mediated Populism

Swati Maheshwari

Hong Kong Baptist University
swati.maheshwari@gmail.com

Long before Mudde consecrated populism as a defining feature of contemporary Western politics (2004), populist characteristics and rhetoric, in varying degrees, have been an integral part of mainstream politics in many parts of the global south (Subramaniam, 2007). Political scientists conceptualize populist politics as a political strategy whereby a leader claims to be the people's sole true representative reaching voters directly bypassing established intermediary organizations (Wayland 1999, 381) and as such, the populist actor him/herself becomes the crucial element (Ernst, Engesser, Buchel, Blassnig, Esser, 2017). Not surprisingly, one of the key constitutive elements of populist movements is a focus on a charismatic, often, narcissistic and intolerant party "leadership" (van Kessel, 2011; Wayland, 1999; Heinich 2008; Linden, 2008). Although it encompasses a range of attributes in public discourse, political scientists define charisma as a distinct type of legitimate leadership that is personal and aims at the radical transformation of an established institutional order (Pappas, 2011). While the construction of charisma has been a subject of analysis in political communication, salience of the media's role in manufacturing charisma, particularly, in this age of "mediatized populisms" (Chakravartty and Roy, 2017) has been underexplored.

In the world's largest democracy, the incumbent leader, Modi's historic parliamentary majority was ascribed, in considerable measure in public discourse, to his charismatic personality. The right wing, authoritarian Modi's "charismatic" leadership is attributed to have fashioned a new hegemonic bloc by reconstituting the voting public pulling together contradictory strands of tradition and modernity, capitalists and the working class, upper and lower castes, rewriting electoral success (Sinha, 2017; Chakravartty and Roy, 2017). The right-wing, nationalist political party that Modi helms, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has historically deployed television to fashion a political Hindu nationalist ideology and legitimize their political project transforming the media-politics relationship in India (Rajagopal, 2001). The 2014 national elections saw the employment of new communication technologies to reconstitute the public space and craft a Modi-centric campaign downplaying the collegial, party-based approach of the BJP (Jaffrelot, 2015).

Interestingly, Modi had been a successful provincial politician for decades but his "charisma", "hypnotic oratory and theatrical flair" seems to have been discovered by the media when he launched his bid to one of the country's highest offices in the months before the 2014 national elections (Kaplan, 2009). While studies have analyzed how Modi employed social media to construct a populist image and discourse in the run up to the 2014 elections (Sinha, 2017), this paper aims to illuminate the strategies populist leaders like Modi, who has always exerted tight control over media coverage of himself (Ohm, 2015), use to manufacture political charisma adopting the Weberian idea of it being socially and politically constructed (Keller, 1999). Given the inextricable link between charisma and populism, analyzing the process by which political charisma is constructed is crucial to our understanding of the mechanisms of populist politics (Gurov and Zankina, 2013). This study unpacks the charisma and vision that was imputed to Modi by the news media through a discourse analysis of the coverage of his election campaign to give a richer insight to the shift from party to personalistic politics and its implications for democratic theory.

Political anger, Populism and the Modi phenomenon

Priyanka Dasgupta

priyanka0709@yahoo.com

Populist leaders are said to possess some broad characteristics- a certain mass appeal helping them to relate with their publics (Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014), advocacy of an anti-elitist and anti-establishment ideology (Mudde & Rovira-Kaltwasser, 2012) and a savvy use of a narrative that is abrasive and belligerent (Hawkins, 2010; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) that is able to simultaneously unite and divide. More often than not, it is also coupled with attempts to circumvent institutions of democracy, reflecting a propensity to accumulate power at the expense of other political entities (Roberts, 1995).

In their analysis of the communication style of populist leaders, Block and Negrine (2015) presented their critical framework based on three elements- “identity, rhetoric and use of the media” (p. 181). They describe identity as a fluid construct that is dependent on connecting with the grassroots, challenging the status quo and promoting the Other (in this case “Lutyens Delhi”) as the ruling elite. The rhetorical style such leaders adopt is often emotional, nationalistic and belligerent, which can help them being one with their publics. Finally, all populist leaders seek to use the media in a specific way, and exist not because of the support of the media but despite it. They do it in a few ways – first, by playing the underdog and aggrandizing the media space, and second by showcasing newsworthy events, which lends support to their cause. The direct conversations with the public via social media provide legitimacy to their cause.

While this framework is quite comprehensive, we propose that in the case of Modi, there is yet another attribute that comes into play- political anger. Crossley (1995) states that anger is not merely an emotion, it is a determinant of behavior. In other words, it is the “publicly verifiable aspects of embodied conduct or behavior” (Crossley, 1995, p. 143). Drawing upon public anger, Modi’s skillful handling of it has lent legitimacy to his actions.

References

- Block, E. & Negrine, R. (2017). The Populist Communication Style: Toward a Critical Framework. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 178–197.
- Crossley, N. (1995). ‘Body Techniques, Agency and Intercorporeality: On Goffman’s Relations in Public’. *Sociology*, 29 (1), 133–149 .
- Hawkins, K. (2010). *Venezuela’s chavismo and populism in comparative perspective*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties’ discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46, 319–345.
- Mudde, C., & Rovira-Kaltwasser, C. (Eds.). (2012). *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective democracy*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Roberts, K. (1995). Neoliberalism and the transformation of populism in Latin America: The Peruvian case. *World Politics*, 48 (1), 82–116.
- Stavrakakis, Y., & Katsambekis, G. (2014). Left-wing populism in the European periphery: The case of SYRIZA. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 19 (2), 119–142.

Redefining the people: the inclusive and exclusive discourse of populist politics

Yuval Katz & Young Rim Kim

University of Michigan

youngrim@umich.edu

One of the foundations of the ambiguous definition of populism is 'the people'. Populist political movements, wishing to appeal and speak on behalf of "the people", create a set of rules in which its members, the insiders, are differentiated from outsiders; a system of inclusion and exclusion. Mass media is a central space where this discussion takes place. By Investigating the news and public responses to national conflict and infectious disease outbreak, we demonstrate how the systems of inclusion and exclusion work respectively in constructing a populist discourse.

We argue that a rise in a populist discourse is related to a simultaneous demise in a discourse about peace. A peace discourse, operating both internally within the nation and externally with its former enemies, strives to include different communities and bridge their ideological differences. In Israel, Yitzhak Rabin's funeral illustrates this. Rabin, who led the Oslo peace process, was assassinated by an Israeli Jew who opposed it. The murder was one of the most divisive events in Israel's political history. Nevertheless, his funeral, which turned into a global iconic event, has a lasting symbolic power. It remains a discursive site where differences between Israelis they can be debated, even if it falls short of mending them.

On the other hand, Shimon Peres' funeral, which took place at a time when Israelis have given up hope for peace, did not have a similar symbolic traction. Although Peres also led the Oslo process, an analysis of Facebook comments and interviews with politically active students after his funeral reveals that it did not turn into a media event. Instead, they reflect a divided Israeli society, in which common people as well as political leaders constantly indulge in a discussion about who is a 'real' or a 'loyal' Jew. Those who do not adhere to these definitions are depicted as foreign agents working to undermine the nation.

Border crossing of outsiders into the inside is also demonstrated in the travelling of pathogen anthropomorphized to the people who ostensibly carry them. They are demarcated as either 'good' or 'bad' citizens during the outbreaks of infectious diseases. Specifically, we investigate the media portrayals and public response to the 2015 MERS outbreak in South Korea to illustrate how they promoted xenophobic discourse towards outsiders. Since the first confirmed patient was a Korean businessman who worked in Saudi Arabia, he was severely stigmatized for bringing in this external agent inside the community. An analysis of news comments and interviews with journalists shows that he was quickly marked as an exemplar of a 'bad citizen.' His foreign activities and relationship with the Middle East were framed as 'irresponsible' and 'unpatriotic', as they led to a national crisis. While a virus, in nature, does not respect borders in today's interconnected world, it is imagined through a body of an outsider, who carries the virus both medically and symbolically. This imagination creates a discourse that exclude certain individuals from 'the people', leading to populist agendas that justify policing and surveillance of outsiders.

Uncomfortable symbiosis: Attention capture, normalization, and criticism in the news coverage of fringe social groups and populist movements

Bernat Ivancsics

Colombia University

bi2155@colombia.edu

In this talk I will attempt to describe the contentious nature of the mainstream political news coverage of radical social groups, such as fringe political parties on both sides of the political divide, as well as their sympathizers. My premise is that the inherent tension exhibited in mainstream publishers' attention dedicated to radical political identity and opinion—often criticized as risking their normalization—is a structural necessity of the interaction between media power and populist voices. I argue that the reason for this structural linkage is that the symbolic-political power of the media is premised on the attention economy of its audience for private companies and on the public service mandate for tax-payer funded publications; meanwhile, the normative power of populists rests on the constitutive capacity of mainstream media to acknowledge and, therefore, legitimize populist voices as subjects. I will conceptualize radical groups as populists, whose ultimate political aim is, ironically, apolitical: their efforts to situate themselves as speakers for the 'majority' in order to redeem the participatory qualities of democracy flouts the technical-bureaucratic operation of the constitutionality of democratic societies. Radical groups construct themselves as the purifying force in democratic societies, and their exclusionary stance toward minorities often confuses or denies racial, class, or cultural divides. As the populist subject finds itself at the center of mainstream media's public tribunal, it enjoys and exploits the attention but loathes the analytic gaze.

In order to develop an operative concept of 'populism,' I will first survey key ideas in democratic theory, sampling critical analyses of the revolutionary-constitutional axis in democracies (Wolin 2016, Arendt 1990); theories of the redemptive function of populism in liberal democracies (Laclau 2005); descriptions of the populist imagination of meritocracy, equality, and justice (Hofstadter 1965, Bell 1972); and finally the conceptualization of populism as not simply a 'reason,' a democratic function, or a particular social hysteria, but as a floating ideological frame potentially adopted by various populations to legitimize themselves as the 'majority' opinion (Kazin 1998). In an addendum to the political science discourse on populism, I will adopt recent findings of 'new media' analysis, where scholars recognized the conducive role that digital and social media have played in the amplification of messages by populist politicians and radical groups (Chadwick 2013, Engesser et al. 2017, Kraemer 2014). My case studies will include popular or viral interviews with subjects who harbor extreme political views; the coverage of rallies and protests; and news analyses and news commentary of polls that showing upticks in the popularity of both fringe groups and other populist agendas. Moving beyond the platitudes that describe mainstream media's loss of its gatekeeping powers as a consequence of the design-engineered immediacy of social media and blogging, I want to reorient our focus to the still-powerful framing capabilities of mainstream media outlets. Representing extreme political voices becomes a problematic process in scenarios where fringe groups capture the attention of media institutions. Conversely, while fringe groups or populist politicians remain effective in their immediate interactions with their constituents on social media, they gain political legitimacy by scaling up their identity through provoked media attention.

Works referenced in abstract

Bell, Daniel. "On Meritocracy and equality." *National Affairs*, Fall (2017). Accessed: December 10, 2017.

Chadwick, Andrew. *The Hybrid Media System*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013.

Engesser, Sven; Ernst, Nicole; Esser, Frank & Büchel, Floring. "Populism and social media: how politicians spread a fragmented ideology," *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 8 (2017): 1109-1126.

Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. New York: Knopf, 1965.

Kazin, Michael. *The Populist Persuasion*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Kramer, Benjamin. "Media Populism: A Conceptual Clarification and Some Theses on its Effects." *Communication Theory* 24, no. 1 (February 2014): 42-60.

Laclau, Ernesto. *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso, 2005.

Wolin, Sheldon S. *Fugitive Democracy and Other Essays*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2016.

Positioning of Journalism in an Age of Populism

Michael Koliska & Kalyani Chadha

Georgetown University & University of Maryland

michael.koliska@georgetown.edu

The role of journalism in an age of populism is not only complicated but arguably poorly understood as well. While some media outlets may pander to populist political agendas articulated by governments or politicians, others resist, opening themselves up to severe criticism and attacks by powerful political players and increasingly, the public. Accusations of political bias or labels like fake news and lying press are often employed. Understanding the role journalism is playing or rather is being cast to play in an era of populism is critical in order to gauge the limitations journalism is facing to fulfill its democratic mission. In this paper we propose that the rise of populism is tied to a process of delegitimizing independent, neutral and balanced journalism. Through the digitization of the communication technologies news audiences have both much greater access to the public sphere as well as a significantly enhanced ability to exercise their right to participate in public debate. Meanwhile, politicians and other powerful public figures can bypass the press to directly reach the public. In this situation, the public and also individual agents became much more active, salient and influential participants in public interactions with institutions and organizations. In such interactions, we argue, that politicians and parts of the public are increasingly positioning (Harré & Van Langenhove, 1999) independent and critical news media outlets as political players. Positioning theory suggests that within public interactions or discourse individuals' but also institutions' perceived roles may be positioned or repositioned by various interactors within discourse, resulting in a limitation of possible legitimate actions (Harré & Moghaddam, 2003) i.e. not being able to work as independent journalists. The repositioning of journalism from independent and neutral actors to political players delegitimizes journalists as they are being portrayed as politically motivated agents. Interestingly this repositioning simultaneously legitimizes only forms of journalism that are inherently politically biased i.e. supporting the view of government etc. In this double move of delegitimizing and legitimizing of news organizations the journalistic paradigm of independent and neutral truth-tellers is being systemically undermined and destroyed as no legitimate form of journalism can be regarded free of a political bias. Thus journalism is being denied the ability to hold the powerful accountable as the news media is being positioned as a means to politically influence the public discourse with a specific goal in mind. Journalists are pushing back against such accusations as they recognize the positioning as "inappropriate to personal/political beliefs both of one's own and of others" (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 56).

In this study we map the evolving public discourse around populist political parties/ individuals and journalists in the US and Germany over the past two years and how they are positioning each other in these discourses. First, findings suggest that there is a move towards an increased politicization of journalism, delegitimizing its role in the public sphere, while journalists try to reject such positioning by frequently self-positioning themselves and their profession as independent and neutral.

Harré, R. & Moghaddam, F. M. (2003). *The Self and Others: Positioning Individuals and Groups in Personal, Political, and Cultural Contexts*. Westport, Conn: Praeger.

Davies, B. & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning. *The Discursive Production of Selves*. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20, 43-63.

Van Langenhove, L. & Harré, R. (1999) *Positioning Theory: Moral Contexts of Intentional Action*, Publisher. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publishers.

Changing Faces of Populism: Anti-liberal, Illiberal, and Liberal

András Bozóki

Central European University

bozokia@ceu.edu

Populism, be it democratic or authoritarian, was considered for long period of time as anti-liberal by definition. Historically it was largely true, particularly if we investigate the cases of North America and Latin America, where populists defined themselves as democratizing forces against big business and the liberal oligarchs. Recently, populism was identified with illiberalism, i.e. a conscious rejection of liberal democracy and its values. Populist democracies have been identified with illiberal democracies. While there is an overlap between the two, these are different phenomena, which should be investigated more closely. Finally, even more recent populists tend to defend, as they say, basic values of „European civilization” which includes not only the defence of Christianity and Western democracy, but also feminism, checks and balances, gay rights and secularism. New populists present themselves as last defenders of multicultural, pluralist European liberal democracy. These three forms of populism, and its inherent irony, will be compared and analyzed in the presentation.

I Stand with Golden Dawn” Transnational Networks and the “Groupuscularity” of White Nationalist Populism

Kevan Feshami

University of Colorado Boulder
kevan.feshami@colorado.edu

On its face, the Greek political party Popular Association—Golden Dawn appears as an extreme right nationalist organization focused on narrowly Greek concerns, ranging from exiting the EU to refugees in Greece. But such nationally-oriented rhetoric belies the party’s much broader, international endeavors to link its populist rhetoric to networks of global white nationalism. From its early days, Golden Dawn’s members have been actively reaching out to white nationalist groups as far flung as South Africa’s Afrikaner Weerstandbeweging. Party members, including at least one of its sitting MPs, have also been active for decades in the global racist music scene, collaborating with bands from around the world and promoting a pan-European racialist vision. Since the party’s success in the 2012 Greek elections, Golden Dawn has established chapters in the US and Australia which actively work to develop ties with white nationalists in those countries. Key to this effort are two YouTube channels run by Golden Dawn New York (GDNY) which translate official party videos and subtitle them in English. GDNY members promote both the party and its channels on a variety of white nationalist digital platforms, including the prolific and popular Red Ice Radio and the venerable forum Stormfront.

Accordingly, this paper explores Golden Dawn’s various transnational connections, with a particular emphasis on GDNY’s digital networking and party members’ involvement in the global racist music scene. Golden Dawn, the paper argues, plays an important role in what Roger Griffin calls the “groupuscular” networks of contemporary white nationalism. The “groupuscles”—small groups, individuals, platforms, and, increasingly, some larger parties and movements—of these networks are connected through a variety of increasingly dense linkages, bolstered especially by digital communications technologies since the 1990s. Through their connections, white nationalist groupuscles form bonds, share ideas, and negotiate the construction of racial identities which can bridge national, ethnic, and ideological differences. By transmitting and circulating racist anxieties about immigration and economic turmoil, Golden Dawn plays to a deeply entrenched white nationalist belief in existential threats which endanger the white race, attempting, in the process, to forge a common understanding of a pan-European people whose very existence is imperiled. These bonds, in turn, have the potential to lay a foundation for further transnational coordination among white nationalist movements. As such, it is crucial to better understand how these networks operate so as to better grasp how contemporary white nationalism develops and operates as an interrelated global phenomenon. This paper contributes to that effort.

Circulating (II) Liberalism on the Internet

Burcu Baykurt

Columbia University

b.baykurt@columbia.edu

In the recent discussions about the rise of populism around the world, the role of the internet is still an open, yet highly debated, question. As opposed to a singular media logic (Chakravartty and Roy 2017), this paper suggests examining the variegated dynamics of the internet's circulatory capacity (Katzenstein and Seybert 2018) over time as an alternative explanatory framework. Focusing on the time period between 1990 and 2015, I investigate how the internet facilitated a glimpse of a distinct global order over which multilateral diplomacy, networked communications, and international non-governmental organizations loomed, even while the U.S. dominated militarily. Through a comparative review of the history of foreign policy practices and the evolution of the internet in the United States, European Union, Brazil, China, and Turkey in this time period, I introduce three distinct phases -- and capacities -- in which the internet has enabled market populism, propagated a civilizational capacity, and eventually subverted the circulation of the ideas and values of global liberalism. By surveying this particular history across different case countries, this paper aims to showcase how the emerging illiberal populist uses of the internet could be traced back to a prior period when foreign policy elites used the same medium to galvanize populist movements around the world in the name of sustaining a global liberal order.

The paper proceeds in three parts: I show that the first period between 1990 and 2000 is marked by the inception of a global network, which was led by the United States, as a form of market populism as well as a source of normative leadership in international relations. In the second period, between 2000-2010, there is more inconspicuous state control in internet governance alongside an internationally expanding tech companies, thereby giving the appearance of an interconnected cyberspace with a multitude of users and communicative practices. With the rise of social media platforms and smart devices in the mid-2000s, this is the era in which a burgeoning civic space emerges online, one that ostensibly functions as global commons with rather cosmopolitan, liberal ties that defy national borders and/or jurisdictions.

The third period, circa between 2010-2015, is characterized by a series of disruptions to this supposedly multilateral, networked global public sphere. From China's heavy-handed control over popular tech products or the European Union's regulatory actions in taxation, privacy or anti-trust to Brazil's call for more regional or even national internet infrastructures, this last era is marked by a palpable suspicion toward the internet, whose nationalist roots bluntly reappear especially after 2013.

References

Chakravartty Paula and Srirupa Roy. 2017. "Mediatized Populisms: InterAsian Lineages." *International Journal of Communication*. Volume 11.

Katzenstein Peter J. and Lucia A. Seybert, eds. 2018. *Protean Power: Exploring the Uncertain and Unexpected in World Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Populism and its Discontents: Rumor, Knowledge, and Violence in Digital India

Aswin Punathambekar & Sangeet Kumar

Denison University and University of Michigan

kumars@denison.edu

The role of social media platforms, that form an indispensable component of the communicative aspect of the global rise of populisms, is only just being understood by scholars. It is now a widely agreed adage that the “political logic” of populism, while as old as politics itself has received an undeniable fillip with the global rise of platforms that allow for solidarities that construct transitory “ad-hoc publics” coalescing across time and space. Our presentation will consider the rise of populism in India with a focus on social media’s ability to enable publics that leverage sameness and equivalences across seeming heterogeneities by creating a frontier of antagonism that distinguishes the self from the Other. While the rise of particular iterations of nationalism is a global phenomenon, we analyze its iteration in India by focusing on how the affordances of the microblogging platform Twitter and the video creating and sharing site Youtube have aided the phenomenon. While the digital media ecology (in India and elsewhere) is far broader than these two platforms, we show how the combined affordances of Twitter and Youtube create a mutually reinforcing communicational dynamic that brings together fast-paced publicly accessible conversations unfolding in real time (on Twitter) with videos that connect with and reinforce narratives by providing visual “evidence” for those ongoing conversations. We focus in particular on rumor as a highly performative form of communication (Bhabha, 1994) that has come to play a key role in shaping discourses and public understandings of religious, ethnic, and sexual ‘others’ in contemporary India. These attempts to create and push particular narratives about history and the place of religious and ethnic minorities are the obverse effect of the very processes of democratization of media and culture that digital media technologies have justifiably been lauded for. Digital platforms’ widely acknowledged emancipatory effects have enabled solidarities against authoritarian institutions, unshackled information from regulatory controls and provided a voice to the erstwhile unheard. And yet those very affordances of digital media technologies also allow for alliances among users for previously fringe opinions and the usurpation of the mantle of an “expert” by anyone with an Internet connection thus emboldening reactionary political forces whose effects are globally visible.

India’s teeming heterogeneity makes the study of populism within its cultural and political sphere different from its iterations at other sites that have witnessed a similar rise in jingoistic nativism. The country’s plurality goes beyond the usual axes of religion, race or ethnicity to include language, region and caste that make the construction of popular publics a different and more complicated exercise than Euro-centric theories would have us believe. By analyzing case studies and sites that are irreducible to these dominant theories, that have primarily relied on western case studies and models to understand the political, cultural and social logic of populism, we seek to extend and present corrections to them.

Populism in Digital India: Deliberative Politics of Online Access in Urban India, case of 'Free Wi-Fi' projects in three metropolitan cities

Aasim Khan & Faiz Ullah

IIIT Delhi & TISS Mumbai

aasim@iiitd.ac.in

This paper evaluates the phenomenal rise of the promise of 'free' online access to the Internet within the context of digitalisation of public communications in urban India. It analyses the discourse of unlimited access and the underlying populist logic that has propelled 'free Wi-Fi' as a prominent slogan in elections in the country. More specifically it considers the case of three large metropolitan regions of Delhi, Mumbai and Bangalore, each of which are currently implementing large 'Free Wi-Fi' projects for its citizens. In analysing the discourse of online access, the paper unpacks the populism along two specific lines: the citizens' right to city and right to work and employment. The paper shows that rather than see it purely as a technocratic scheme, the promise of 'free Wi-Fi' is part of a populist politics which emanates from the globalisation fuelled growth in communications but crucially also gets entangled in the local dynamics of urban mobility and labour.

Using a systematic discourse and frame analysis, we compare the 'Aam Aadmi Wi-Fi' in Delhi with 'Aaple Sarkar' project in Mumbai and 'Namma Wi-Fi' programme in Bangalore and show how each case reflects a distinct variation in the populism of online access. First, using a conceptual frame of access and urban mobility, we argue that in some instances the debate focussed more on the question of identity and ethnic politics of the city and the debate around Free Wi-Fi brought these fault-lines to the front. In other contexts, particularly in the case of Delhi the debate on access exposed the limits of populist agenda that seeks to claim for itself a newness, direct access to people, and a moral purpose.

Besides the question of urban mobility, we also analyse the framing of Free Wi-Fi projects through the lens of Right to work and employment. Here we consider the framing of access in terms of youth and internet and how it frequently used alongside a promise of radical overhaul of work and employment opportunity in policy documents. And yet, on ground, the debates frequently move away from right to work and into the domain of cynical manipulation through the language of aspiration and class mobility.

While we consider the case of India, this work echoes with trends in other countries witnessing rapid urbanisation and ascendant neoliberalism, for instance in Turkey (Bulut and Yoruk 2017) where digital populism is evident in the discourse of online access and new media. Our analysis allows us to move the lens away from questions of culture and onto the political economy of access in urban setting where the metropolitan elites now relies on new media to bypass conventional institutions of governance and accountability. Our findings raise questions about the promise of online access and at the same time shows the pitfalls in terms of allowing populist politics to thrive in the face of grim scenario of youth unemployment and ethnic discontent.

Economic and cultural populism in contemporary Australia: a study of Pauline Hanson's One Nation

Shant Fabricatorian
Colombia University
sdf2125@colombia.edu

Populism has always been a somewhat elastic term, able to be 'stretched' to accommodate quite distinct examples of political campaigning which retain at their core an element of contestation between 'common people' and an 'elite' (be it real or imagined). Nonetheless, the specific notion of 'economic populism' has, until recently, not generally been delineated as a discrete concept in Western politics. In one way, this is unsurprising, as economic policy has historically played a crucial role (either implicitly or explicitly) in the platforms of virtually all populist politicians. Policies such as advocacy of wealth redistribution, ethno-centrism, stricter trade barriers or increased immigration control all have substantial economic effects. To some degree, all populism has traditionally been considered economic at its foundation, given that the rhetoric of anti-elitism, and associated notions of recompense and restitution, necessarily implies some amount of reallocative activity.

At one level, therefore, clearly-demarcated notions of 'economic' populism may be the result of attempts to distinguish the platforms of social democrats like Bernie Sanders from the more overt 'cultural populism' promulgated by the likes of Donald Trump – a point articulated by John Judis. At another level of consideration, however, this distinction may have arisen because there is a fundamental lack of emphasis at a detail level on matters economic from politicians who fall most comfortably within the right-wing, cultural populist paradigm.

One such example of this tendency is the Australian political party, One Nation, and its leader Pauline Hanson. Hanson represents an early example of the contemporary strain of global right-wing populism. Founded in 1997, the party rose to prominence by leveraging anti-immigration sentiment, focusing especially on perceptions of excessive immigration from Asia, along with attacks on 'undeserving' recipients of welfare and an economically protectionist platform. In more recent times, this has shifted to a greater focus on anti-Muslim sentiment, along with a somewhat abstract critique of the failures of the governing class.

In many ways, the current makeup of the party is representative of contemporary global trends, including its reticence to publish policy proposals containing meaningful economic detail. An independent analysis of the party's platform in the recent Queensland state election noted there existed "very little detail" with which to conduct any economic analysis, with no costings and few timelines. Despite this, the party attracted just under 14% of the vote in the aforementioned election.

To this end, the paper analyses the role of the Australian media in its portrayal of One Nation as a party, and Hanson as its representative, between 1997 and 2017. Looking at major broadsheet and tabloid publications in both urban and rural areas, it will analyse how coverage of One Nation divides between the aforementioned 'economic' and 'cultural' frames, assess the degree to which One Nation's lack of economic policy detail has proved a focus of reportage, and consider whether this has changed across the surveyed period. Analysis will be broken down between commentary and news reporting. Overall, the paper aims to understand the following questions: how the representation of One Nation's economic policies compares with the traditional focus on the economic 'credentials' of the country's major parties; and to what extent One Nation's status as a populist 'outsider' party has been able to be maintained after two decades, despite its apparent lack of credibility in this arena. The results may also prove more broadly relevant in seeking to explain the ongoing appeal of 'cultural populist' parties across the globe which share a similar lack of detail in their economic policy proposals.

Takfiri Anachronism in the Islamic State Group's Populist Media Strategy

Omar Al-Ghazzi

London School of Economics & Political Science

O.Al-Ghazzi@lse.ac.uk

How is populism related to the propaganda of jihadist movements, particularly the Islamic State (IS) group? This paper addresses that question by focusing on the way the IS group communicates and performs a return to the origins of Islam in 7th century Arabia. It argues that a performance of an imagined historically-authentic and originary Islam is at the heart of IS's communicative strategy, which claims that resurrecting and performing 7th century Islam is the only way to be Muslim. IS performs what it imagines to be a caliphate that follows the "methodology of the Prophet"—in what represents an operationalization of long-alluded-to Islamist aims about return to Islamic authenticity and about undoing Western influences. It deems everyone who disagrees with it as simply anti-Islamic. I refer to that media strategy, which IS deploys to target its enemies as infidels, as takfiri anachronism (takfiri in Arabic is an adjective describing accusations of apostasy). I seek to demonstrate how IS's takfiri anachronism relies on mixed discursive textual and visual tactics that aim to conceal its contemporary political hybridity, vulnerability, and its presentist approach to Islamic texts. I analyze IS's self-presentation as a caliphate in a number of its official videos and statements. I focus on the initial IS announcement on the establishment of the caliphate and how its leader Abu-Bakr Al-Baghdadi performed his role as "the caliph" in the summer of 2014. I also examine how the parallelism between its videos showing the destruction of the Iraqi-Syrian common border, and its videos displaying the destruction of pre-Islamic archeological monuments, presents an absolute binary between the categories of 'Muslim' and 'infidel,' which is projected across time. It concludes with reflecting how that tactic of IS is by no means unique and is in fact a common feature of contemporary global populism.

Populist Arguments in the Dengue Controversy in the Philippines: What the Experts and the Public Say about Dengue Control

Elena E. Pernia & Lourdes M. Portus

University of the Philippines

eleniapernia@gmail.com

Dengue has been a serious public health concern in the Philippines, where on average there are more than 170,000 infections and some 700 reported deaths annually (Department of Health Disease Surveillance 2012). The disease, which can be fatal if not treated, is transmitted by the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito and is endemic in many areas of the country. There are four strains of the dengue virus, where one (serotype 4) has shown to be “deadlier” than the other three. Symptoms of the dengue disease include high continuous fever last for several days, nausea or vomiting, abdominal pain, body weakness, red rashes on body extremities, and bleeding - which is why dengue fever is also referred to as hemorrhagic fever.

Dengue prevention strategies include personal protection and environmental management. The government as part of its environmental management efforts to control dengue has implemented various programs, such as fogging, dengue vaccine, mosquito net soaking, etc. Moreover, social preparations to empower communities on how to reduce the disease were conducted by both government and non-governmental organizations (delas Llagas et al., 2016). The areas where these empowerment strategies were implemented saw the trained community members cleaning their streams, wearing long clothing, keeping their limitation of human contact with vectors in order to prevent dengue fever and chikungunya from spreading unchecked. Other prevention programs address reduction of the vector (mosquito) population density through the elimination and modification of drums or containers, which have served as mosquito breeding sites. Experimental studies, including a current one (Factors Affecting the Acceptability of an Innovative Auto Dissemination of Insecticides, InDAI, for Reducing Dengue Incidence in the Philippines) where the researchers are involved, have been conducted to determine the cost-effectiveness of vector surveillance and control tools (i.e., ovitrap). Recently, a dengue vaccine, Dengvaxia, was developed by Sanofi Pasteur to “provide persistent protective benefit against dengue fever in those who had prior infection” (from <http://mediaroom.sanofi.com>). However, this “vaccine aimed at protecting hundreds of thousands of school children from dengue may have put their lives at risk” (from <http://cnnphilippines.com/news/2017/12/09/The-Dengvaxia-controversy.html>). Some 800,000 school children in various parts of the country participated in the dengue immunization program, where the Philippine government paid Sanofi PhP3.5 billion (roughly US\$70 million) for the Dengvaxia vaccine. Prior to the mass inoculation, public health experts had raised warnings regarding the appropriateness of the vaccine, warnings which were not heeded as the immunization program proceeded.

The Dengvaxia controversy in the Philippines has become an opportunity for populist politicians and the media to indulge in a blame game regarding the deaths of children alleged to have been caused by the vaccine. As news reports have put it, various offices in the legislative and executive branches of government are conducting investigations where accountability fingers are being pointed in different directions.

Populism against Nature: Propaganda Posters and the General Assault on the Environment in Maoist China (1949-1976)

Xinghua Li

Babson College

xli8@babson.edu

China's environmental conditions have deteriorated rapidly since the liberal economic reforms in the late 1970s. Yet historians point out that during the Mao era (1949–1976), environmental destruction, with the nation's early modernization and industrialization programs, was already rampant. This paper focuses on the propaganda posters during Mao's era, which drew on populist rhetoric to mobilize the masses to participate in a "socialist construction" campaign and dramatically transform the face of the earth through human labor and technology. This collection of artifacts bears witness to a series of aggressive agro-industrial campaigns, from backyard steel production and sparrow killing in the "Great Leap Forward," indiscriminate land terracing and lake filling in the "Learning from Dazhai" campaign, to war preparation and factory relocation in the "Third Front" program and the opening up of the wasteland by the "Sent Down Youth." These terraforming activities involved willing participation of millions of Chinese people, at all levels of society, and reached all corners of China, from cities to countryside, from mountains to grassland, from rainforests to rivers and wetlands. As evidenced in these posters, such mass mobilization efforts explicitly framed Nature as an enemy to be conquered, science-educated intellectuals as anti-revolutionaries, and traditional ecological wisdom as superstitions.

While historians (Shapiro 2001; Marks 2011) have well documented the catastrophic environmental impact of these campaigns, their studies do not focus on the role mass media played in propagating these ideologies, and the evidence they supply largely derive from verbal media (e.g. journalistic accounts, interviews, and written memoirs) rather than visual media. This paper applies a mixture of semiotic, rhetorical, and psychoanalytic methods to analyze the persuasive power embodied in these posters. Psychoanalysis posits that the ideological power of iconic media imagery often derives from its function as a symbolic screen, which prevents the masses from confronting certain collective trauma. I hypothesize that many of these propaganda images of industrialization and modernization reveal the unconscious fear and anxiety spun from China's historical trauma—militarily, economically, politically, and ecologically—as well as the nation's nascent but also traumatic encounter with modernity. These sentiments, I argue, have deeply penetrated the cultural unconscious and continue to shape the Chinese ecological imagination in the contemporary world.

Generally speaking, Mao's socialist industrialization campaign expands our understanding of populism not just as a political program that supports the power of the people in their struggle against a privileged elite, but also one that widely antagonizes any types of rules and authorities such as Nature, science, traditional knowledge, values, ethics, etc. While this case took place in a socialist country and promoted leftist ideology, it provides comparative value with the populism cases in modern democratic societies and right-wing movements and shed light on the persuasive power of populist rhetoric in modern societies.

Authoritarian Populism and Soft Power: China's External Propaganda under Xi

Maria Repnikova

Georgia State University

mrepnikova@gsu.edu

In examining the linkages between communication and populist movements, recent studies have primarily focused on domestic manifestations of populism in democratic (including emerging democracies) societies. In recent years, however, authoritarian regimes have also carried populist features, including official use of nationalistic rhetoric and deployment of policies that appeal to the masses and have an anti-elitist undertone. This appeal, moreover, is aimed not solely at domestic, but also at global audiences, as authoritarian leaders use their media channels to sell a vision of an alternative governance model to that of Western liberal democracy.

China is a prominent example, with President Xi recently launching a campaign of “telling the China story” or explaining its successful development trajectory to the world. This paper draws on a unique set of in-depth interviews with Chinese media practitioners to see how they interpret the opportunities and limitations of China's populist global strategies. Specifically, it analyses the workings of external propaganda in manufacturing a vision of China as an aspirational model for other countries.

The preliminary analysis of the perspectives of editors and journalists involved in curating global propaganda for China's state news agency, Xinhua, suggests that there is a significant disconnect between top-level rhetoric and aspirations, and the actual practice of constructing China's image through the media. Specifically, interviews point to uncertainty amongst media practitioners about the nature of China's global image that they should project, as well as frustrations about the limited agency journalists have in telling compelling China stories. The paper further suggests that while much of this effort is supposedly aimed at global publics, the audience of this campaign is also a domestic one, as populist Xi attempts to demonstrate China's growing global importance, fuelling a nationalist sentiment that supports a stronger and more uncompromising party-state.

Understanding "Populism" from journalists' and politicians' perspective

Michal Hamo & Zohar Kampf & Naama Weiss-Yaniv

Netanya Academic College & The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

zohar.kampf@mail.huji.ac.il

The growing scholarly, journalistic and public attention to the recent spread of populist ideologies and rhetoric has resulted in 'populism' becoming a salient keyword in contemporary political discourse. While there are ample and diversified academic definitions and conceptualizations of the term – focusing on its thematic-ideological, institutional-procedural or discursive-rhetorical aspects – its vernacular and public uses were hardly studied. The present study aims at addressing this lacuna, by exploring the emic meanings and functions of 'populism' in Israeli mediated political discourse.

To this end, we combined (1) quantitative analysis of the reference and linguistic context of a sample of 500 occurrences of 'populism', 'populist' and their inflections in major print, broadcast and online news outlets during 2012-2017; and (2) qualitative analysis of the uses and functions of the keywords in mediated political talk in all broadcast television and radio channels during 2016-2017.

Findings indicate that 'populism' is widely used by journalists and politicians alike in all various meanings discussed in academic literature: as a descriptive label of specific ideologies, political organizations and people, or as a mostly pejorative evaluation of statements, arguments, political positions or actions. Moreover, it is a highly flexible and debatable term: it may be applied to opposing and contradicting positions, arguments and entities, and its use may be contested and lead to meta-discursive discussions on its applicability and relevance.

Adopting an interactional perspective on 'Populism' reveals that it serves as a multi-functional positioning device. Accusations of populism are used in other-positioning, of both non-present third parties and co-present interlocutors, to challenge antagonists and to undermine their challenges ("you're doing a very populist, unfair thing"). Interestingly, 'populism' is also evoked in two highly sophisticated self-positioning strategies: First, to preempt potential accusations of populism by explicitly addressing them, while either providing justifications to the use of populist arguments or denying populist motives and intentions ("I think a vast majority of the public, and I'm not saying that out of populist considerations, will feel..."). Second, 'populism' is invoked as a 'veiled threat', as possible populist claims are mentioned only to be immediately dismissed ("I don't want to say that the government doesn't want to succeed, because I'm not populist in such matters..."). Both strategies allow journalists and politicians to take advantage of the benefits and appeal of populist rhetoric without being accused of populism.

Our findings reveal that 'populism' is a highly quotable keyword, as the very use of the term is deemed newsworthy, merits attention and interest, and generates expanding cycles of on-going discourse and negotiation. Furthermore, they may be interpreted as evidence of the self-reflexivity of contemporary political discourse, as 'populism' is salient not only as an ideological agenda and a rhetorical style, but also an object for a meta-discourse negotiation over communicative norms and practices.

The Populist Journalism Challenge: A Comparative Analysis of Right-Wing Media Sites in the USA, Germany, and Austria

Lea Hellmueller & Matthias Revers

University of Houston & University of Leeds
leahellmueller@uh.edu

The impact of right-wing populist movements on public debate, power relations, and civic epistemologies is felt across democratic societies. Besides advancing these interest, populist journalism sites fight their own battle against the media establishment, whose work they seek to discredit and whose predicaments they relish. This study analyzes the discursive field of populist journalism, which we explore through Breitbart.com in the US, Jungefreiheit.de in Germany, and Unzensuriert.at in Austria. We focus particularly on meta-journalistic discourse (Carlson, 2016) on and about these sites. Besides an overarching exploratory purpose, we ask whether similarities and differences between these cases are extensions of prevalent and persistent media systemic differences, as distinguished by comparative media scholars. Theoretically, we conceive the position and discursive strategies of populist journalism sites in field theoretical terms. More specifically, we understand the nexus between the media establishment and populist journalism as incumbent-challenger relationship (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012), which is a driver for field transformation. Furthermore, we argue that the position from which populist journalism currently operates is best understood with Gil Eyal (2013) as a space between fields, more specifically between journalism and politics, between which these entities broker. Populist journalism thereby potentially further contributes to the ongoing expansion and blurring of the boundaries of the journalistic field, which is usually attributed to participatory media practices.

The first stage of the project analyzed articles in the media sections of these sites from 2015 until 2017, using computational text analysis (specifically topic models), which led us to distinguish three broader discursive constructions of media criticism: transnational, transnational-localized, and localized. Even as right-wing populist journalism sites focus mostly on national issues, these are often intertwined with transnational concerns, in accordance with the increasingly international orientation and coordination of political movements. Populist journalism confronts national and international media elites, positioning themselves as defenders of 'the people' within and beyond national borders. The second stage of the project will focus on the main targets of right-wing media criticism and look at how populist journalism sites are themselves represented by legacy news media.

Newsroom and the Imagine Audience: Interviews from a Local Populist Broadcast Station

Angelica Kalika

University of Colorado

angelica.kalika@colorado.edu

As journalism fights for funding and market share in a broad media landscape, local broadcast is turning to alternative forms of creating and distributing content. Interviews from a local broadcast station reveal a form of media populism in the way the station is redesigning and rewriting news routines. Through the lens of the Hierarchy of Influence and the dangers of the imagined audience, this study will show how local journalism is trying to save the local news through media populism tactics. A debate on experts, and negotiating broadcast journalism norms with modern newsroom demands will show the tension between market and populist tactics to gain audience attention. Leading to ask, how does the observed and imagined audiences in emerging forms of broadcast journalism conform to media populism as an orientation to news production?

Newsroom routines have gone through a creative disruption and newsworthy values have shifted to one originating from comments, tweets, and followers on social media pages. The goal of this paper is to explore how two new programs from a single broadcast station, in a US city, implicate the imagined audience. Two new shows, one based on an uber traditional model and the other on a trending model, will look at the ways in which broadcast journalists interact with and think about audiences in these shows. Media populism, as defined by Kramer and the imagined and actual audiences lead to Reese and Shoemaker's Hierarchy of Influence, that organization digital first strategy as well as social systems level is impacting news routines.

The two new programs resonate with populist visions of audiences because this imagery helps to justify news practices and/or professional identity. Content producers that turn to populist elements can find themselves facing the ideological issues of using these to benefit or to manipulate the public. Some societies are drawn to populist rhetoric to use it as a corrective and most hope it won't turn into something that is authoritarian or destructive. Here, these elements are used to essentially find ways to sustain local media. If local stations die, that diverts more power to stations that have similar voice and might not care for the needs of a local community. Less local coverage could mean less public interests pieces and investigative content. Market pressures make populism compelling and is found to be a last ditch effort to sustain/support local broadcast journalism. Broadcast journalists resonate with populist visions of audiences because this imagery helps to justify news practices or professional identity in the creation of these two news shows that are changing due to pressures the in the Hierarchy of Influence. This impacts the station's routines and ideological look at the imagined audiences. Journalists might start perceiving that their evolving interactions with audiences in the news allow for participatory democracy.

Interrogating Discourses About Populism: Mimesis, Ideology, Bubble and Hype

Peter Csigo & Aurelien Mondon & Benjamin De Cleen & Jason Glynos

Budapest University of Technology and Economics

csigo.peter@dkht.uni-obuda.hu

In parallel with the populist upsurge in politics the concept of populism has become ubiquitous in political, journalistic and academic parlance. This paper formulates directions for analysing discourses about populism. The proposed analysis addresses the long-known problem that academia or journalism are not independent observers but take part in the creation and justification of the social reality they describe. The paper starts with the idea that the ‘explosion’ of commentary on populism is due not simply to academic or expertly commentators’ innocent and unbiased adaptation to the growing ‘objective’ importance of populist politics. Moving beyond such a naive notion of ‘mimesis’, we move to the concepts of ‘ideology’, ‘hype’ and ‘bubble’ which shed light on different aspects of the entanglement of commentary and populist political reality.

The concept of ‘ideology’ may well be applied to the anti-populist tenor of mainstream commentary, which represents an ideological resistance against rising populism and takes the side of the establishment in the increasingly significant political cleavage of (pro-)populism vs. establishment anti-populism (Stavrakakis 2017a, 2017b; Taguieff 1998). But a reference to ideology also helps us understand the less common defence of (typically left-wing) populism against such anti-populist criticism by academics and commentators.

The concept of ‘hype’ (Glynos and Mondon 2017) refers to anti-populist commentary, understood as a broader ‘political logic’ which, in promoting the dangerous populist rebel as the establishment’s “favourite enemy”, tends to legitimate both the populist rebel as the main challenger of the establishment and the norms governing the status quo. Anti-populist hype, in other words, actively creates and conceals more promising and potentially more dangerous (e.g. progressive populist) alternatives. The new populist right is therefore often a beneficiary of this logic just as much as the establishment.

Finally, anti-populism and pro-populism may also be read as predefined and mutually sustaining positions in a ‘speculative bubble’ (Csigó 2016), in which actors and commentators speculate on people’s alleged needs in a self-referential game. Both positions are symptoms of a dysfunctional, mediatized political universe that has risen after the weakening of hierarchical institutions of intermediation and representation (mass parties, unions, associations). The above self-enclosed antagonism stems from the narrowing of vertical channels of interaction and negotiation that would be necessary for a more genuine voicing of popular opinion.

The concepts of populist hype-making and bubble-blowing draw our attention to the shared interests of seemingly antagonistic positions in politics, journalism and academia. In cultivating shared discourses such logics lend legitimacy to those positions and marginalize ways of organizing politics that go beyond the apparently all-encompassing antagonism of populists and non-populists in the existing system of mediatized electoral democracy (eg. via deliberative and participatory forms, or representative intermediary institutions).

Hystérie and the end of History

An analysis on Populism and Revolution in the XXI Century

Sebastián Ronderos

Universidad de los Andes

se.ronderos52@uniandes.edu.co

This paper relies on Freud's psychoanalytic theory of the collective and Lacan's development of the "discourse of the hysteric" to analyse political-discursive appropriations after the "square protests": the Arab Spring; the Iberian Indignados and Greek Aganaktismenoi; the UK and US Occupy Wall Street; the Gezi in Turkey; June 2013 in Brazil; and France's Nuit Debout in 2016. The antineoliberal uprisings in Latin America at the end of the 90's and the protests that erupted around the world after the financial meltdown in 2008 emerged as central feature of the global socio-political landscape, opening up a dispute for hegemonic articulation. According to Laclau, populism appears therein as the objet petit a of the political as such. We apply Political Discourse Theory (PDT) to identify a series of strategies post-2008, used by left and right wing actors within this field, finding two main characteristics: on the one hand, (i) a binary internal distinction required for building a collective subject of transformation (Us/We-Them) and, (ii) the social articulation of a danger represented by a contingent "other" (Us/We-Them-They). Though these strategies appear within national political arenas, through "polarization" they are internationalized and seeking to appropriate a master-signifier that unifies heterogeneous demands, where the empty signifier "corruption" is perceived as chief among them.