MASARYK UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL STUDIES

Populist communication: content, actors, opportunities, and impacts in times of crisis

Habilitation thesis

Alena Kluknavská, PhD.

Department of Media Studies and Journalism

Brno 2024

Abstract

The prominence of populist communication and the influence of populist actors have become significant and dynamic phenomena in today's interconnected world. The increasing relevance of populist communication is evident in electoral politics and broader public discourse, with the potential to shape public opinion and policy decisions and resonate with diverse audiences, especially during political or public crises when individuals turn to elites for guidance to alleviate uncertainty. Against this background, this habilitation thesis investigates four main dimensions of the multifaceted dynamics of populist communication during times of crisis: 1) the content and style of populist communication employed in the public sphere, 2) the role played by political, public, and media actors in creating and disseminating populist messages, 3) the role of the political and discursive opportunities and the crisis contexts in shaping populist messages, frames, and narratives, and 4) the public responses and reactions to populist communication. The main research objectives are to examine specific communication elements of populist narratives, understand the roles played by political and public actors, uncover the impact of contextual opportunities for creating and disseminating such communication, and assess public reactions to this form of political communication. With ten academic studies and the overarching synopsis, the thesis synthesizes original research that theoretically, conceptually, methodologically, and empirically contributes to the research field of political communication.

Acknowledgments

This habilitation thesis would not have been possible without all the people I was fortunate to work with and receive feedback and support from during my academic career. I thank you all. I would also like to express my deepest and most profound gratitude to my husband and thank him for his love, empathy, understanding, and our beautiful children.

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

In today's increasingly interconnected world, the prominence of populist communication and the influence of populist actors have become significant and dynamic phenomena with the potential to shape political and public debates, public opinion, and policy decisions (Aalberg et al., 2017). Populism stands out as a prominent concern in contemporary democracies when populist ideas and populist politicians gain significant traction worldwide and steadily rise in influence. Populist communication, characterized by an 'us versus them' rhetoric, simplified messaging, black-and-white rhetoric, or emotional appeals, has gained traction across the globe (Ernst, Esser et al., 2019). This communication resonates with a broad spectrum of society and engages diverse audiences. Consequently, populist actors, often charismatic and skilled at utilizing public discontent and specific contextual opportunities available for creating and disseminating populist messages, have risen to prominence in various countries, challenging established political structures and norms (Bos & Brants, 2014; Stanyer et al., 2017).

The increasing relevance of populist communication is evident not only in electoral politics but also in broader public discourse. It has influenced how political leaders connect with their constituents and how people perceive their role in the political process (Reinemann et al., 2017). Furthermore, populist narratives have the potential to undermine democratic institutions and erode trust in established authorities, increasing existing public uncertainties and societal divides as well as prompting questions about its long-term implications for governance and the quality of democracy (Abts & Rummens, 2007; Canovan, 1999; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012).

This issue of populist communication gains particular relevance during political or public crises when individuals turn to elites for information and guidance to alleviate fear and uncertainty (Van Aelst & Blumler, 2021). The series of economic, political, and health crises in the last 15 years affected economies, social structures, political structures, and people's individual well-being, highlighting the importance of political communication during such emergencies. Moreover, the proliferation of the digital public sphere served as an opportunity for public discourse and political engagement but also showed how it could

hinder democratic deliberation (Friess & Eilders, 2015). This trend becomes evident, particularly as social media platforms often inadvertently promote and amplify hostile and polarizing communication, drawing like-minded individuals together in echo chambers and reinforcing their pre-existing beliefs (Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017).

Against this background, this habilitation thesis investigates four main dimensions of the multifaceted dynamics of populist communication during times of crisis: 1) the content and style of populist communication employed in the public sphere, 2) the role played by political, public, and media actors in creating and disseminating populist messages, 3) the role of the political and discursive opportunities and the crisis contexts in shaping populist messages, frames, and narratives, and 4) the public responses and reactions to populist communication.

The main research objectives of this habilitation thesis include examining specific communication elements of populist narratives, understanding the roles played by political and public actors, uncovering the impact of contextual opportunities for creating and disseminating such communication, and assessing public reactions to this form of political communication. These research objectives translate into more specific research problems focusing on specific content and stylistic elements of populist communication, their employment by political and public actors within the mediated public debates, the influence of contextual characteristics spanning different crises, countries, and political configurations, as well as verbal or emotional responses to hostile and negative communication.

The structure of the introduction reflects its main goals. In the first part, I present the main conceptualization of populist communication, followed by the specific role that populist actors play in spreading this communication, the role of the context, and the impacts of such populist messages. The introduction concludes by specifying the contributions of the thesis to scholarly literature. In the next parts, the thesis presents an overview of studies included as part of a collection of previously published scholarly works, followed by each of these publications. In the conclusion section, I discuss the main results and present key conclusions synthesized from the publications included in the thesis.

Furthermore, I offer the implications of these findings and present limitations and avenues for future research.

1.1 Populist communication: Conceptualization, the role of actors and the context, and its influence

1.1.1 Populism: An ideology and a communication phenomenon

Populism has emerged as a defining feature in contemporary politics. Despite different approaches to populism, treating it, for instance, as a discourse (e.g., (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) or a performative style (e.g., (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014), there has been a widely accepted approach to populism as a thin-centered ideology which revolves around the antagonistic relationship between the people and elites (e.g., (Mudde, 2004, 2007; Rooduijn, 2013; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011; Stanley, 2008). In this approach, populism is considered a set of ideas that rely on a profoundly polarizing and Manichean perspective of politics, shaping its understanding of the world and society in terms of stark contrasts and oversimplified distinctions.

The political conflict is thus presented as a deep division between two homogeneous and dichotomous groups of the "pure" or "good" people and the "corrupt" or "bad" elites (Mudde, 2007). This antagonism distinguishes it from conventional political competition, which is characteristic of political dynamics between government and opposition. In this relationship, the people are portrayed as betrayed by the elites; elites are, at the same time, accused of exploiting their positions of power at the expense of the people. As a result, the central argument is that political decision-making and political representation should mirror the general will of the people (Mudde, 2007; Stanley, 2008). As such, core ideational elements of populist ideology are comprised of anti-elitism, people-centrism, and the restoration of sovereignty.

When populist ideology and populist ideas are expressed or manifested in public, their main elements are communicated through specific content and stylistic communication characteristics. This approach builds upon the role communication plays in comprehending populism rather than considering ideological and discursive approaches to

populism as mutually exclusive (Kefford et al., 2022). This idea comes from a recognition that the populist ideology or a distinct set of populist ideas must be communicated publicly to achieve intended goals and to influence the audience (de Vreese et al., 2018). Considering populism as an ideology or a set of ideas that are shaped, articulated, and disseminated by political or media actors bridges the existing streams of literature from the fields of political science and communication science and creates a political communication-centered approach to populism (Aalberg & de Vreese, 2017; de Vreese et al., 2018; Stanyer et al., 2017).

Content and stylistic characteristics of populist communication

Based on the core elements of populist ideology and populist communication styles (Bos et al., 2011; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Mudde, 2007), we can identify specific content and stylistic elements of populist communication (Ernst, Blassnig, et al., 2019; Ernst, Esser, et al., 2019). The content of populist communication relates to political or public communication of core ideological components communicated through key messages, frames, or claims. The populist communication style refers to presenting and expressing these messages, frames, or claims by utilizing specific expressive characteristics and presentational style of elements (de Vreese et al., 2018).

Anti-elitism as a content characteristic employs conflictive rhetoric toward the elites and condemns the establishment, powerholders, decision-makers, and any elite proponent of the supposedly failing system. It refers to elites being in stark contrast to the people's interests. It discredits or blames elites for perceived misdeeds happening in society and accuses them of being detached from the people. The people-centrism advocates for the people through expressions of populist closeness to the people, stressing people's virtues, praising their achievements, or describing them as a monolithic group. People can take different meanings, which allows for unifying diverse audiences under one label (de Vreese et al., 2018). The appeal is thus put on people's identities through the identification of a threat that is perceived as being caused by "corrupt elites" at the expense of "pure people" (Moffitt, 2016; Mudde, 2007). Restoration of sovereignty either advocates for the people's

sovereignty or denies the elite's sovereignty. The populist communication style encompasses negativity, emotionality, and sociability (Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017; Ernst, Blassnig, et al., 2019; Ernst, Esser, et al., 2019).

In a political communication approach to populism, populism is understood as a communication feature rather than the characteristic of the actor sending the message (de Vreese et al., 2018). The emphasis is put on the communication process through which different political and public actors create, shape, and disseminate populist ideas in a certain populist manner.

Affinity between populism and post-truth communication

The current communication environment is characterized by a concerning development: an alarming increase in discursively constructed dishonesty and untruthfulness by parts of political elites (Egelhofer et al., 2021, 2022; Hameleers & Minihold, 2022). These constructions are a part of post-truth politics characterized by increasing relativism in which evidence is neglected, and factual information comes to be seen as a matter of opinion and conspiracy theories spread (de Vreese et al., 2018; Van Aelst et al., 2017). In such an environment, reality and factuality become subjective and potentially true or accurate as long as they are perceived as such and evoke a sense of resonance (Durnová, 2019; Kluknavská & Eisele, 2023).

Extensive research has been conducted on the concept of post-factual politics. Research in this field has mostly addressed the concepts of misinformation, disinformation, or fake news and explored aspects related to the generation, dissemination, and impact of such deceptive content (e.g., (Chadwick & Vaccari, 2019). While these studies play a crucial role, they often focus on the accuracy or inaccuracy of these messages. They overlook a key dimension specific to post-truth politics: the strategic use of relativization of truthfulness by various actors in a public debate (Farkas & Schou, 2018; Hameleers & Minihold, 2022).

In consensus-driven politics, thoughtful and responsible questioning of reality and truth proves beneficial to democracy. However, post-truth communication is built upon anti-elite hostility towards actors involved in a political debate. This perspective is not concerned with defining who speaks the truth or who tells the lies but rather with

11

strategically manipulating the connotations associated with 'truth' and 'facts' to shape the perception of (un)truthfulness. As such, post-truth communication is not concerned with the actual truthfulness of the political claims but serves as an attack on the actors' legitimacy and integrity. This strategy capitalizes on the binary lens through which politicians scrutinize the honesty of their adversaries, presenting someone feeling 'right' or 'wrong.' These constructions have the potential to divide society along the lines of those who are presented and perceived as truthful and those who are presented and perceived as deceitful (Hameleers & Minihold, 2022). Therefore, post-truth communication and populism are closely aligned in their adversarial framing against elites, accusing them of generating and disseminating false information and lies.

This strategic approach enables politicians to delegitimize their opponents and appear more genuine, thus enhancing their own legitimacy and trustworthiness. It can also help politicians to make their political messages resonate more effectively with their target audiences (Kluknavská & Eisele, 2023). This encompasses anti-elite and anti-establishment designations like 'establishment lies' or 'fake news' (Waisbord, 2018, p. 25) and is expressed more broadly through allegations of falsehood, deceit, dishonesty, or manipulation of reality, facts, or knowledge (Hameleers & Minihold, 2022). Such accusations may be directed towards political adversaries, government, individual politicians, rival parties, journalists, media organizations, and other public actors such as experts or scientists. Unlike misinformation and disinformation, which describe unintentional or intentional deception, post-truth communication involves challenging and contesting the truthfulness of political and public actors involved in a public debate.

1.1.2 The role of populist actors

When examining populism from a communication perspective, we can focus on how political parties, which are pivotal actors in the politics-media-society dynamic, relate to and engage with populism. A closer examination can be directed toward the factors influencing the development and dissemination of populist messages characterized by distinct content and style, specifically what role populist actors play in creating and spreading these messages. In this context, the unique attributes of specific parties or

politicians act as conditions that are anticipated to impact the creation and spread of populist communication.

The studies mostly investigate how and to which extent populist political actors employ key characteristics of populist communication. It explores how the characteristics of political actors, specifically their affiliation with the party labeled as populist, play a role in their use of populist forms of messages. Looking at the adoption of populist messages and styles by populist actors, literature mainly analyzes the differences in how populist and non-populist actors employ populist elements in their communication (e.g., Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020).

Populism often lacks specific positions regarding important political or socio-economic issues. For this reason, it often aligns itself with a "host" ideology such as nativism (Mudde, 2007). In this sense, nativism complements the foundational ideas of populism. Politicians, in their messaging, thus employ narratives and appeals based on identity to establish divisions between "us" and "them." Consequently, populist radical right actors, amalgamating the core aspects of populism, nativism, and authoritarianism, are recognized for their strong alignment with populism and are likely to incorporate populist rhetoric in their communication (e.g., Mudde, 2007; Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017).

1.1.3 Opportunities for populist communication: Political and discursive context and crisis

Populist communication doesn't exist in a vacuum; it is not isolated or detached from but rather deeply intertwined with particular social and political environments. These environments significantly influence the potential of populism and can be most accurately understood through the lens of opportunity structures (De Bruycker & Rooduijn, 2021; Engesser, Fawzi, et al., 2017). The concept was initially developed in social movement studies to refer to a setting that affects social movements and their actors (e.g., Kitschelt, 1986). The concept relates to dimensions of the institutional, political, and discursive environments that incentivize or constrain individuals, groups, movements, parties, or organizations in their efforts to undertake action (Tarrow, 1994). A favorable or open opportunity structure is assumed to lead to an increase in mobilization (Giugni et al., 2005;

Koopmans et al., 2005; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004), whether it is an actual or symbolic mobilization, which includes different forms of political communication.

Traditionally, the focus has centered on institutional or political opportunities, such as the level of access to or openness of the established political system or the responsiveness of political authorities (Giugni, 2011). Scholars have expanded this viewpoint by incorporating cultural dimensions into the concept of opportunity structures (e.g., Gamson & Meyer, 1996), introducing the concept of discursive opportunity structures (Ferree et al., 2002; Koopmans et al., 2005). This discursive side relates to the public visibility, resonance, and political legitimacy of certain actors (Giugni, 2011; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). Discursive opportunity structures refer to elements in public discourse that dictate a message's potential to spread in the public sphere (Koopmans & Olzak, 2004).

This perspective builds upon the idea that political actors strategically select those communication choices that optimize their objectives, which, in terms of opportunity structures, must take into account the visibility, resonance, and legitimacy of their communication (Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Koopmans & Olzak, 2004). Visibility of communication is important for a particular message to have an impact on public discourse and is mostly contingent upon the extent of the inclusion of the message across various media channels. The intensity and character of public response are also important, as positively or negatively resonating messages tend to garner more attention, enhancing the prominence of the actors and their viewpoints in the mediated public sphere. Public legitimacy refers to the extent to which reactions from other actors in the public sphere support rather than refute an actor's claims. Therefore, the likelihood of political actors entering the media arena or creating a particular form of communication is contingent upon various institutional and discursive opportunities.

The opportunity structures play a crucial role in facilitating the entry of populist actors or populist communication into the communication arena. In addition to institutional or political opportunities, which tend to be more constant and dependent on the political system in respective countries, the crisis context seems to be of great importance, especially concerning populist communication.

In the context of populist political communication, the migration issue has been widely studied and seems significant. The minority and migration topics can become sources of political and societal divides, elevated emotions, or even political and public hostility. The crisis context, provided by, for instance, the European refugee crisis of 2015/2016, can increase polarization and politicization of publicly important issues (Gessler & Hunger, 2022). In the Czech Republic, the expectation (and not even actual arrivals) of immigrants coming from mostly Muslim and thus culturally different countries has triggered a broad spectrum of strongly opposed viewpoints, discussions, and widespread public concern (Navrátil & Kluknavská, 2023).

Political actors can leverage such crisis contexts to strengthen their narratives and gain support by using and highlighting populist messages. They capitalize on heightened emotions and divisions within society by presenting themselves as the voice of the people, addressing concerns that mainstream politicians might overlook. In the case of the migration issue, fears and anxieties can be framed through the protection of national identity or security, tapping into the public's sentiments and offering simplistic solutions.

During emergencies like the refugee crisis, populist communication using vivid language and bold claims to emphasize the perceived threats posed by migration and criticizing traditional political elites for failing to address these concerns adequately, fueling existing fears and polarizing opinions further, can gain resonance. By capitalizing on discontent and exploiting the emotional atmosphere, populist language can mobilize support, galvanize the support base, and widen their appeal among those disillusioned with mainstream politics.

The pervasive influence of social media can even amplify populist communication. While social networking sites have become important platforms for various political actors to engage directly with citizens in many countries worldwide (Stier et al., 2020), they offer a particularly suitable platform for populist actors (de Vreese et al., 2018; Stier et al., 2017). Empirical studies have demonstrated how social media actively shares populist communication and amplifies the visibility, credibility, and legitimacy of populist messages and those actors who employ populist rhetoric in their communication (e.g., (Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, et al., 2017; Ernst, Engesser, & Esser, 2017; Moffitt, 2016). The unchecked

and unfiltered access to potential adherents and a personal and immediate connection with the people underscores the tendency to leverage social media for populist communication strategies (de Vreese et al., 2018; Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017).

1.1.4   Impact of populist communication

Populist communication can have several effects on societies and political environments, such as shifts in dominant political discourse, mobilization, or policy-making, and, importantly, the effect on citizens' perceptions, attitudes, cognitions, emotions, or behavior. The research suggests that citizens as active recipients (audiences) of populist messages, which are created by various political and public actors or the media, must be, to a certain extent, affected by these messages (de Vreese et al., 2018; Reinemann et al., 2017). The study of the populist communication effects has often focused on voting for the populist or populist radical right parties; studies, for instance, investigated how populist communication affects perceptions of right-wing populist leaders (Bos et al., 2011) or how it influences citizens' preferences to vote for populist parties (Hameleers et al., 2018). In recent years, researchers have taken an interest in how mediated and direct populist communication influences people´s attitudes, behaviors, sentiments, or perceptions, thus looking beyond electoral preferences or voting for parties (e.g., Hameleers et al., 2020; Hameleers & Fawzi, 2020; Wirz, 2018; Wirz et al., 2018).

Looking at the specific studies, the empirical research found that populist communication can undermine trust in institutions and political elites by portraying them as part of a corrupt elite detached from the people. Such messages can erode trust and lead to a decline in confidence in democratic institutions (Reinemann et al., 2017). Populist rhetoric can also accentuate divisions within society by framing issues in ´us´ versus ´them´ terms. Drawing on the technological opportunities of social media, politicians can directly communicate populist discourse by constructing a pervasive societal divide between the "good" people and "corrupt" elites. Such messages may resonate with the reality constructions of receivers (Hameleers, 2020a). More broadly, this can deepen existing rifts and create new divides among different groups, leading to increased societal or political polarization (Hameleers, 2020a).

Populist communication, especially on social media, can also create echo chambers where people are exposed to content that aligns with their already-held beliefs. As a result of exposure to messages that attribute blame to elites or societal out-groups, citizens may interpret issues in congruent us versus them frames (Hameleers et al., 2018). Such rhetoric, combined with the affordances of social networking sites, can reinforce existing opinions and limit exposure to diverse viewpoints, ultimately affecting the formation of balanced perspectives.

Further, the literature suggests that populist communication may influence people´s anti-establishment populist attitudes (Hameleers & Schmuck, 2017), citizens' anti-immigrant attitudes (Schmuck & Matthes, 2017), emotions and cognitions toward immigrants (Wirz et al., 2018), or the perception of political actors (Bos et al., 2011). Because populism can be regarded as an inherently moralizing discourse, communicating a Manichean view on socio-political reality (e.g., Hawkins et al., 2020), populist messages and cues have also been found to elicit emotional responses among receivers (Wirz, 2018).

1.2   Contributions to the scholarly literature

The core of the thesis comprises ten academic studies, each offering original research that theoretically, conceptually, methodologically, and empirically contributes to the field of political communication. The next part overviews the thesis contributions in each of the four areas covered by the thesis: populism as an ideology and a communication phenomenon, the role of populist actors, opportunities for political communication, and the impact of populist communication.

Populism as an ideology and a communication phenomenon: thesis contribution
In this line of research, the significant contribution of this habilitation thesis lies in examining the specific content and stylistic elements of populist communication deployed in the political actors' direct communication on social media. This part of the thesis focuses on visibility, content, expressive characteristics, and temporal dynamics of anti-elite communication, with a specific focus on post-truth communication. In particular, it investigates the antagonistic anti-elite attacks employed by political party leaders on social

networking sites towards different political and public actors. These anti-elite, post-truth accusations, characteristic of political contestation of truthfulness in a public debate, are conceptually and methodologically captured through the creation of allegations of spreading false information, misperceptions, and lies, along with the emphasis on emotionality and negativity, preferring it to facts and expertise (*Study II*).

The role of populist actors: thesis contribution

The rise of populist actors and the influence of populist communication have raised scholarly concerns to discuss this development also from a communication science perspective and explain the relation of political actors and their utilization of populist communication elements. The contribution of this habilitation thesis in this line of research lies in investigating the pivotal roles of political actors in creating and disseminating populist messages, with a specific focus on the role of populist politicians.

Examining the case of the populist radical right party ĽSNS in Slovakia, the study presented in this thesis showed how populist radical right actors mobilize through populist communication; they employ the politics of "Othering" and apply anti-elite and nativist frames (*Study VIII*) and how their communication strategies adapt over time to best accommodate their electoral interests (*Study V*). Similarly, we examined how extreme right parties adapted their offline and online communication strategies to gain electoral support, focusing on the period between 1993 and 2016 (*Study IX*). Exploring the case of a populist politician, U.S. President Donald Trump, we presented the theoretical association between populism and post-truth communication and empirically showed how political actors can question the truthfulness of their opponents through accusations of untruthfulness (*Study II*). We also analyzed how different political and public actors, including populists, frame minority issues, particularly Roma, in mediated public debates in the Czech Republic, Germany, Netherlands, Slovakia, and the United Kingdom (*Study X*). Furthermore, we analyzed how populist radical right parties and movements in the Czech Republic and Slovakia frame immigration and immigrants, offering a longitudinal perspective over two decades (*Study VI*).

Opportunities for populist communication: thesis contribution

The contribution of the habilitation thesis in this line of research lies in examining the role of specific contextual factors in creating and shaping political communication. Comparing Austrian, Czech, and Slovak migration-related public debates during the refugee crisis, we analyzed the political and public actors' positions and claims-making on the crisis and migration-related topics, asking who shaped the discourse on the crisis in national public realms and how the discourse took shape (*Study VII*). Using longitudinal data from the Slovak and Czech cases, we further examined how economic and refugee crises have influenced the mobilization of the populist radical right regarding the presence, intensity, and forms of their anti-immigrant frames (*Study VI*). Moreover, we investigated how specific political and discursive opportunities in Slovakia offered a favorable context for the creation and spread of anti-elite communication by populist radical right parties, eventually resulting in their electoral breakthrough (*Study V*). We also investigated the party's visibility and content of their communication along with the characteristics of their Facebook supporters in the context of political and discursive opportunity structures (*Study VIII*). Lastly, focusing on the migration crisis from an opportunity structures perspective, we showed how specific context in the Czech Republic and Slovakia helps explain migration mobilization and, as such, may serve to better understand the visibility of populist and post-truth communication (*Study IV*).

Impact of populist communication: thesis contribution

The contribution of the habilitation thesis in this line of research lies in the assessment of the public reactions to political communication, interconnecting the three previous dimensions of populist content, populist actors, and contextual opportunities. The study showed how uncivil and post-truth message elements as specific forms of populist narratives, affiliation with a populist party, and the COVID-19 pandemic crisis increased the volume of emotional interactions with social media political posts of political leaders in the Czech Republic (*Study I).* We also investigated the relationship between the use of populist communication in migration-related social media posts by populist and non-populist

political actors and the use of uncivil and intolerant rhetoric by social media users in the Czech Republic (*Study III*).

Overall, by analyzing and comparing populist communication across different contents and styles, political actors, political issues, and different contexts, this thesis investigates who uses populist messages, how populist communication is expressed through populist content and populist styles, to what extent populist communication spreads in the discourse of populist actors, under what circumstances, and with what impacts.

With ten studies and an overarching synopsis, this thesis demonstrates that populist communication and the populist messages disseminated by populist actors are especially dependent on certain political and discursive opportunities and can exert influence over online debates. Populist communication flourishes when factors such as social media communication, high affinity to post-truth politics, and favorable contextual opportunities are combined.

1.3   References

Aalberg, T., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). Introduction: Comprehending populist political communication. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck, & C. H. De Vreese (Eds.), *Populist political communication in Europe* (pp. 3–11). Routledge.

Aalberg, T., Esser, F., Reinemann, C., Strömbäck, J., & de Vreese, C. (2017). *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge.

Abts, K., & Rummens, S. (2007). Populism versus democracy. *Political Studies*, *55*(2), 405–424.

Bos, L., & Brants, K. (2014). Populist rhetoric in politics and media: A longitudinal study of the Netherlands. *European Journal of Communication*, *29*, 703–719. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323114545709

Bos, L., van der Brug, W., & de Vreese, C. (2011). How the Media Shape Perceptions of Right-Wing Populist Leaders. *Political Communication*, *28*(2), 182–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2011.564605

Canovan, M. (1999). Trust the people! Populism and the two faces of democracy. *Political Studies*, *47*(1), 2–16.

Chadwick, A., & Vaccari, C. (2019). *News sharing on UK social media: Misinformation, disinformation, and correction*. Loughborough University.

De Bruycker, I., & Rooduijn, M. (2021). The People's Champions? Populist Communication as a Contextually Dependent Political Strategy. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *98*(3), 896–922. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699021998648

de Vreese, C. H., Esser, F., Aalberg, T., Reinemann, C., & Stanyer, J. (2018). Populism as an Expression of Political Communication Content and Style: A New Perspective. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *23*(4), 423–438. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218790035

Durnová, A. (2019). Understanding Emotions in Post-Factual Politics. In *Understanding Emotions in Post-Factual Politics*. https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788114820

Egelhofer, J. L., Aaldering, L., & Lecheler, S. (2021). Delegitimizing the media?: Analyzing politicians' media criticism on social media. *Journal of Language and Politics*, *20*(5), 653–675. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.20081.ege

Egelhofer, J. L., Boyer, M., Lecheler, S., & Aaldering, L. (2022). Populist attitudes and politicians' disinformation accusations: Effects on perceptions of media and politicians. *Journal of Communication*, *72*(6), 619–632. https://doi.org/10.1093/joc/jqac031

Engesser, S., Ernst, N., Esser, F., & Büchel, F. (2017). Populism and social media: How politicians spread a fragmented ideology. *Information Communication and Society*, *20*(8), 1109–1126. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1207697

Engesser, S., Fawzi, N., & Larsson, A. O. (2017). Populist online communication: Introduction to the special issue. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(9), 1279–1292. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328525

Ernst, N., Blassnig, S., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., & Esser, F. (2019). Populists Prefer Social Media Over Talk Shows: An Analysis of Populist Messages and Stylistic Elements Across Six Countries. *Social Media + Society*, *5*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118823358

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 and Society*, *20*(9), 1347–1364. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1329333

Ernst, N., Engesser, S., & Esser, F. (2017). Bipolar Populism? The Use of Anti-Elitism and People-Centrism by Swiss Parties on Social Media. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *23*(3), 253–261. https://doi.org/10.1111/spsr.12264

Ernst, N., Esser, F., Blassnig, S., & Engesser, S. (2019). Favorable Opportunity Structures for Populist Communication: Comparing Different Types of Politicians and Issues in Social Media, Television and the Press. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *24*(2), 165–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218819430

Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2018). Fake news as a floating signifier: Hegemony, antagonism and the politics of falsehood. *Javnost-The Public*, *25*(3), 298–314.

Ferree, M. M., Gamson, W. A., Gerhards, J., & Rucht, D. (2002). *Shaping Abortion Discourse. Democracy and the public sphere in Germany and the United States*. Cambridge University Press.

Friess, D., & Eilders, C. (2015). A systematic review of online deliberation research. *Policy & Internet*, *7*(3), 319–339.

Gamson, W. A., & Meyer, D. S. (1996). Framing political opportunity. In D. McAdam, J. D. McCarthy, & M. D. Zald (Eds.), *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings*. University of Michigan.

Gessler, T., & Hunger, S. (2022). How the refugee crisis and radical right parties shape party competition on immigration. *Political Science Research and Methods*, *10*(3), 524–544.

Giugni, M. (2011). Political opportunity: Still a useful concept? In M. Hanagan & C. Tilly (Eds.), *Contention and trust in cities and states* (pp. 271–283). Springer.

Giugni, M., Koopmans, R., Passy, F., & Statham, P. (2005). Institutional and discursive opportunities for extreme-right mobilization in five countries. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, *10*(1), 145–162.

Hameleers, M. (2020). Augmenting polarization via social media? A comparative analysis of Trump's and Wilders' online populist communication and the electorate's interpretations surrounding the elections. *Acta Politica*, *55*(3), 331–350. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-018-0119-8

Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & de Vreese, C. (2018). Framing blame: Toward a better understanding of the effects of populist communication on populist party preferences. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, *28*(3), 380–398. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2017.1407326

Hameleers, M., & Fawzi, N. (2020). Widening the Divide between Them and Us? The Effects of Populist Communication on Cognitive and Affective Stereotyping in a Comparative European Setting. *Political Communication*, *37*(5), 612–634. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1723754

Hameleers, M., & Minihold, S. (2022). Constructing Discourses on (Un)truthfulness: Attributions of Reality , Misinformation , and Disinformation by Politicians in a Comparative Social Media Setting. *Communication Research*, *49*(8), 1176–1199. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650220982762

Hameleers, M., & Schmuck, D. (2017). It's us against them: A comparative experiment on the effects of populist messages communicated via social media. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(9), 1425–1444. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328523

Hameleers, M., Schulz, A., Wirz, D. S., & Andreadis, I. (2020). The Effects of Populist Identity Framing on Populist Attitudes Across Europe: Evidence From a 15-Country

Comparative Experiment. *International Journal Of Public Opinion Research*, *March*. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edaa018

Hawkins, K. A., Kaltwasser, C. R., & Andreadis, I. (2020). The activation of populist attitudes. *Government and Opposition*, *55*(2), 283–307.

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. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x

Kefford, G., Moffitt, B., & Werner, A. (2022). Populist attitudes: Bringing together ideational and communicative approaches. *Political Studies*, *70*(4), 1006–1027.

Kitschelt, H. P. (1986). Political opportunity structures and political protest: Anti-nuclear movements in four democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, *16*(1), 57–85.

Kluknavská, A., & Eisele, O. (2023). Trump and circumstance: Introducing the post-truth claim as an instrument for investigating truth contestation in public discourse. *Information, Communication & Society*, *26*(8), 1583–1600. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.2020322

Koopmans, R., & Muis, J. (2009). The rise of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands: A discursive opportunity approach. *European Journal of Political Research*, *48*(5), 642–664. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2009.00846.x

Koopmans, R., & Olzak, S. (2004). Discursive opportunities and the evolution of right-wing violence in Germany. *American Journal of Sociology*, *110*(1), 198–230.

Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M., & Passy, F. (2005). *Contested citizenship: Immigration and cultural diversity in Europe* (Vol. 25). University of Minnesota Press.

Moffitt, B. (2016). *The global rise of populism: Performance, political style, and representation*. Stanford University Press.

Moffitt, B., & Tormey, S. (2014). Rethinking populism: Politics, mediatisation and political style. *Political Studies*, *62*(2), 381–397.

Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government and Opposition*, *39*(4), 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

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

Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C. R. (2012). *Populism in Europe and the Americas: Threat or corrective for democracy?* Cambridge University Press.

Navrátil, J., & Kluknavská, A. (2023). A tale of two campaigns: Understanding the role of short-term political context in Czech and Slovak counter/mobilizing on migration. *Social Movement Studies*, *22*(2), 250–268.

Reinemann, C., Matthes, J., & Sheafer, T. (2017). Citizens and Populist Political Communication: Cross-National Findings and Perspectives. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Strömbäck, & C. H. de Vreese (Eds.), *Populist political communication in Europe* (pp. 381–394). Routledge.

Rooduijn, M. (2013). The Nucleus of Populism: In Search of the Lowest Common Denominator. *Government and Opposition*, 1–27. https://doi.org/10.1017/gov.2013.30

Rooduijn, M., & Akkerman, T. (2017). Flank attacks: Populism and left-right radicalism in Western Europe. *Party Politics*, *23*(3), 193–204.

Rooduijn, M., & Pauwels, T. (2011). Measuring Populism: Comparing Two Methods of Content Analysis. *West European Politics*, *34*(6), 1272–1283. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2011.616665

Schmuck, D., & Hameleers, M. (2020). Closer to the people: A comparative content analysis of populist communication on social networking sites in pre- and post-Election periods. *Information Communication and Society*, *23*(10), 1531–1548. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1588909

Schmuck, D., & Matthes, J. (2017). Effects of Economic and Symbolic Threat Appeals in Right-Wing Populist Advertising on Anti-Immigrant Attitudes: The Impact of Textual and Visual Appeals. *Political Communication*, *34*(4), 607–626. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1316807

Stanley, B. (2008). The thin ideology of populism. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *13*(1), 95–110.

Stanyer, J., Salgado, S., & Strömbäck, J. (2017). Populist Actors as Communicators or Political Actors as Populist Communicators: Cross-National Findings and Perspectives. In T. Aalberg, F. Esser, C. Reinemann, J. Stromback, & C. H. De Vreese (Eds.), *Populist Political Communication in Europe* (pp. 353–364). Routledge.

Stier, S., Bleier, A., Lietz, H., & Strohmaier, M. (2020). Election campaigning on social media: Politicians, audiences, and the mediation of political communication on Facebook and Twitter. In *Studying Politics Across Media* (pp. 50–74). Routledge.

Stier, S., Posch, L., Bleier, A., & Strohmaier, M. (2017). When populists become popular: Comparing Facebook use by the right-wing movement Pegida and German political parties. *Information Communication and Society*, *20*(9), 1365–1388. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328519

Tarrow, S. (1994). *Power in Movement*. Cambridge University Press.

Van Aelst, P., & Blumler, J. G. (2021). *Political Communication in the Time of Coronavirus*. Routledge.

Van Aelst, P., Strömbäck, J., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., de Vreese, C., Matthes, J., Hopmann, D., Salgado, S., Hubé, N., Stępińska, A., Papathanassopoulos, S., Berganza, R., Legnante, G., Reinemann, C., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2017). Political communication in a high-choice media environment: A challenge for democracy? *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *41*(1), 3–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551

Waisbord, S. (2018). The elective affinity between post-truth communication and populist politics. *Communication Research and Practice*, *4*(1), 17–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2018.1428928

Wirz, D. S. (2018). *Persuasion Through Emotion? An Experimental Test of the Emotion-Eliciting Nature of Populist Communication*. *12*, 1114–1138.

Wirz, D. S., Wettstein, M., Schulz, A., Müller, P., Schemer, C., Ernst, N., Esser, F., & Wirth, W. (2018). The Effects of Right-Wing Populist Communication on Emotions and Cognitions toward Immigrants. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *23*(4), 496–516. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218788956

2   Overview of studies

The following section overviews ten original studies included in this habilitation thesis, including an explanation of the author´s contributions, summaries of the studies, and a synthesis of their methodologies. In seven of these studies, I was the lead author, and in three of these studies, I served as a second contributing author. Eight studies were published in the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI). These WoS studies were indexed in Q1 (two studies), Q2 (four studies), Q3 (one study) and Q4 (one study) journals. Further, one study was published in a Scopus database, and one study is a chapter in an international monograph.

2.1   List of studies

I.   **Kluknavská, A.,** Novotná, M., & Eisele, O. (2023). Fuming Mad and Jumping with Joy: Emotional Responses to Uncivil and Post-Truth Communication by Populist and Non-Populist Politicians on Facebook During the COVID-19 Crisis. *Mass Communication and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2023.2252396

II. **Kluknavská, A**., & Eisele, O. (2023). Trump and circumstance: introducing the post-truth claim as an instrument for investigating truth contestation in public discourse. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(8), 1583-1600. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.2020322

III. **Kluknavská, A.,** Havlík, V., & Hanzelka, J. (2023). Unleashing the Beast: Exploring Incivility and Intolerance in Facebook Comments Under Populist and Non-populist Politicians' Social Media Posts About Migration. *Human Affairs*. https://doi.org/10.1515/humaff-2023-0046

IV. Navrátil, J., & **Kluknavská, A.** (2023) A tale of two campaigns: understanding the role of short-term political context in Czech and Slovak counter/mobilizing on migration. *Social Movement Studies, 22*(2), 250-268. https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2022.2031958

V.   Voda, P., **Kluknavská, A.**, & Spáč, P. (2022). From Trivialized Neo-Nazis to Parliament: Explaining the Electoral Success of the Extreme Right Party ĽSNS in Slovakia. *Problems*

of Post-Communism, 69(6), 498-513.

https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2020.1869909

VI. **Kluknavská, A.,** & Caiani, M. (2021). Populist radical right and immigrants in times of crisis: the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In Theodoros Fouskas. *Immigrants, Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Times of Crises: B. An International Handbook on Migration, Asylum, Social Integration and Exclusion*. Athens: European Public Law Organization, 473-495.

VII. **Kluknavská, A.**, Bernhard, J., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2021). Claiming the Crisis: Mediated Public Debates about the Refugee Crisis in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *34*(1), 241-263.

https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez022

VIII. **Kluknavská A.**, & Hruška, M. (2019). We Talk about the "Others" and You Listen Closely: The extreme right communication on social media. *Problems of Post-Communism, 66*(1), 59-70, 10.1080/10758216.2018.1500861

IX. **Kluknavská, A.** & Smolík, J. (2016). We hate them all? Issue adaptation of extreme right parties in Slovakia 1993–2016. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 49*, 335-344*.* http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2016.09.002

X. Kroon, A., **Kluknavská, A.,** Vliegenthart, R., & Boomgaarden, H. (2016). Victims or Perpetrators? Explaining Media Framing of Roma across Europe. *European Journal of Communication*, *31*(4), 375-392. 0.1177/0267323

2.2   Author's contributions

Study I: Fuming Mad and Jumping with Joy: Emotional Responses to Uncivil and Post-Truth Communication by Populist and Non-Populist Politicians on Facebook During the COVID-19 Crisis

Contribution: 75%

As a leading author, I crafted the initial study outline and oversaw the research design. My responsibilities encompassed the overarching structure of the study, including main arguments, data collection, sampling, introduction, theoretical framework, literature review, methodology, and discussion and conclusions. Additionally, I played a role in the

statistical analysis and interpretation of the results. I authored the initial manuscript and managed revisions based on feedback received during the peer-review process. The co-authors contributed to the analysis, offering insights into the introduction and theory sections, and provided general comments on the manuscript draft.

Study II: Trump and circumstance: introducing the post-truth claim as an instrument for investigating truth contestation in public discourse

Contribution: 90%

I was responsible for the main idea and main conceptual and methodological arguments, drafted the outline of the study and the research design, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. I was also responsible for the revisions based on reviewers´ and editors´ comments during the peer-review process. I was responsible for the data collection and data analysis. I wrote most of the introduction, theoretical part, literature review, methodology, results section, and study conclusion. The co-author provided theoretical and methodological inputs into the manuscript's design and draft and comments in the peer-review process.

Study III: Unleashing the Beast: Exploring Incivility and Intolerance in Facebook Comments Under Populist and Non-populist Politicians' Social Media Posts About Migration

Contribution: 50%

I was responsible for framing the introduction, theory, methodology, statistical analysis, and results sections. I also contributed to the discussion and conclusion sections. I helped with the data sampling and data collection. The co-authors were responsible for data collection, contributing to the theory, and drawing conclusions.

Study IV: A tale of two campaigns: understanding the role of short-term political context in Czech and Slovak counter/mobilizing on migration

Contribution: 50%

The first and second authors contributed equally and shared responsibilities in the initial outline of the paper, research idea, and research design. I mainly contributed to the introduction, theory, data analysis, discussion, and conclusion sections.

Study V: From Trivialized Neo-Nazis to Parliament: Explaining the Electoral Success of the Extreme Right Party ĽSNS in Slovakia

Contribution: 45%

My contribution lies in drafting the main arguments of the manuscript, introduction, literature review, and discussion and conclusion part. The co-authors were responsible for the theoretical part, methodology, and statistical analysis and contributed to the discussion and conclusion sections. The first author also led the revisions of the manuscript in the peer-review process.

Study VI: Populist radical right and immigrants in times of crisis: the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Contribution: 50%

I was a responsible author who created the main research idea and theoretical and empirical arguments. Additionally, I crafted the study's outline and established its research design. My responsibilities extended to data collection, sampling, coding, and analysis. I composed the initial manuscript and played a central role in subsequent revisions, addressing feedback received during the peer-review process. Collaboratively, the co-author contributed theoretical and methodological insights to the study's design, assisted with the analysis, and provided valuable comments while drafting the chapter.

Study VII: Claiming the Crisis: Mediated Public Debates about the Refugee Crisis in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia

Contribution: 85%

I drafted the main research idea and created a research design. I led data sampling, data collection, data coding, and analysis. I also prepared the initial manuscript, focusing on the introduction, theory, methods, results, and discussion. I was also responsible for the

revisions resulting from a peer-review process. The co-authors wrote a literature review, helped with the data coding, and provided comments on the manuscript and the peer-review process.

Study VIII: We Talk about the "Others" and You Listen Closely: The extreme right communication on social media

Contribution: 90%

As a lead author of the study, I led the data sampling, data collection, coding, and analysis, formulated the core research concept, designed the study, and authored a major portion of the initial manuscript, encompassing the introduction, theory, methods, results, and discussion sections. I also managed the revisions based on feedback from reviewers and editors during the peer-review phase. My co-author contributed by offering methodological insights into the study's design, then also helped with part of the analysis and offered comments and revisions on the manuscript.

Study IX: We hate them all? Issue adaptation of extreme right parties in Slovakia 1993–2016

Contribution: 90%

I took charge as the lead author throughout the study's progression. I formulated the core research idea, designed the outline of the study, and wrote most of the manuscript, either in the initial phase or in subsequent revisions based on the peer-review process. I was responsible for the introduction, literature review, and main arguments, including theoretical underpinnings and analysis. My co-author offered empirical insights and comments while drafting the manuscript and provided feedback during peer-review revisions.

Study X: Victims or Perpetrators? Explaining Media Framing of Roma across Europe.

Contribution: 45%

My contribution lies in drafting the manuscript's main arguments, introduction, literature review, discussion, and conclusion. I was responsible for data collection, training

the coders for content analysis, coding the data, and part of the data analysis. The co-authors were responsible for the theory, methodology, and statistical analysis and contributed to the discussion and conclusion sections. The first author also led the revisions of the manuscript in the peer-review process.

2.3   Study summaries

Study I (Kluknavská, Novotná & Eisele, 2023) examines the effects of uncivil and post-truth communication of populist and non-populist party leaders on the emotional emoji reactions of social media users during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Specifically, it investigates whether accusations of untruthfulness and uncivil speech influence users' decision to press an emotional reaction icon. It builds upon an assumption that conveying a disrespectful tone toward the participants and topics of the debate, lying accusations, and incivility have become prominent aspects of contemporary political discourse in many European countries. Additionally, it investigates whether there are differences in the effects of communication employed by populist and non-populist political leaders. It inquires about the context of the COVID-19 crisis in political actors' communication and its effect on the emotional reactions of social media users. The study combines research on emotional cues in online political communication and the effects of political elites' messages on social media. It applies manual content analysis (*N* = 2,549 posts) to study the political communication of Czech political party leaders on Facebook during the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020 to February 2021), which generated a higher sense of threat and uncertainty in the public. It looks at the social media communication of party leaders as they have important roles in the strategic discourse of political parties in public debate. The social media environment gives politicians a platform to directly appeal to their followers and people a way to express their opinions and feelings in reaction to political content.

The study postulated several hypotheses and research questions related to the effects of political messages on emotional emoji reactions and specifying how incivility and post-truth communication elements, affiliation with a populist party, and crises might affect users' emotional emoji reactions. We expected that the use of uncivil communication, references to truth and knowledge, and accusations of untruthfulness in posts would

increase the likelihood of emotional emoji reactions to them. We also asked to what extent the use of these three elements by populist actors increases the likelihood of emotional emoji reactions to their posts. We further inquired about the interaction effect of uncivil and post-truth communication. Lastly, we also formulated hypotheses that posts created by populist actors, posts during the lockdowns and heightened emergency government measures during the pandemic, and posts that include COVID-19 as a topic are more likely to receive emotional emoji reactions from users.

Study II (Kluknavská & Eisele, 2023) advances the adaptation of claims-making for the analysis of how actors relativize the truth and use discourses of untruthfulness to attack their opponents, constructing their own versions of reality. It develops a framework for investigating the post-truth discourse – that is, the discourse occupied with the political contestation of "truth" between claimants in the public sphere. The claims-making approach was initially developed in social movement studies. It identifies the claimant, in what form the claim is raised, about what issue, what position is taken towards the issue, and the justification given for it. A claims-making analysis can dynamically trace the (counter-)interventions and positions of actors engaged in public truth contestation instead of delivering a static picture of communication contents. To methodologically advance claims-making analysis for the study of truth relativization, this article is guided by the following question: How can we study the contestation of truth in political communication in a systematic way?

The study extends the argued affinity between populism and post-truth to conceptualize truth contestation in two aspects: (1) the antagonistic anti-elite constructions of accusations of creating and spreading false information and lies, (2) the emphasis on emotionality and negativity over facts and expertise. Exploring the link between populism and truth relativization shows us to what extent post-truth claims are characterized by populist anti-elite messages and style, which serves as a basis for a conceptual framework to study truth contestation. To do so, the study analyzed the Twitter communication of Donald Trump as a prime example for an instance of the post-truth

discourse covering the 2019 government shutdown (22 December 2018 – 25 January 2019), for which we anticipated a high level of political contestation.

Overall, the study aimed to develop a conceptual framework and methodological tool to enable researchers to analyze how actors use accusations of untruthfulness in their discourses. Our analysis demonstrated that the post-truth claim is a useful and viable tool for measuring the contestation of truth in contemporary politics. As claims capture strategic actions made in the public sphere, we argue that claims-making analysis can be used to analyze the positions of actors engaged in public truth contestation in a dynamic way. By offering an analytical tool to map how political actors evaluate the truthfulness of their opponents, the claims-making approach can further contribute to understanding one of the most pressing issues of contemporary democracy in a systematic and comparable manner. Our results also theoretically confirmed the affinity between populism and post-truth, which manifests through anti-elite accusations of dishonesty and falsehood and the use of emotional and negative language instead of emphasizing factuality and knowledge.

Study III (Kluknavská, Havlík & Hanzelka, 2023) investigates the relationship between the use of populist communication in migration-related social media posts by populist and non-populist political actors and the use of uncivil and intolerant rhetoric by social media users. The study investigates whether and how populist communication and the populist character of political parties are associated with uncivil and intolerant rhetoric in social media users' comments. The main research question is: What is the relationship between the use of populist communication in Facebook posts about migration by populist and non-populist political parties and the incivility and intolerance used by social media users in their comments?

We build upon an assumption that populist communication and the involvement of populist actors may play a significant role in fostering uncivil and intolerant online discussions. Politicians employing populist communication use rhetorical strategies that exploit the fears and concerns of the public regarding minority issues, particularly migration. They tend to use narratives and identity-based appeals to create a division of "us" against "them." Such discourse can lead to a more confrontational tone in online

discussions and, ultimately, the use of uncivil or intolerant language, as social media users may feel their identities are being threatened.

Focusing on the case of the Czech Republic between 2013 and 2020, we conducted a quantitative content analysis of Facebook posts about the contentious issue of migration created by political parties and comments under those posts published by social media users. Based on the theoretical assumption that the uncivil and intolerant responses can be linked to users' social identities, we expected that the main elements of populist communication (anti-elitism, people-centrism, ostracization, negative tonality, emotionality) are positively associated with social media users' use of uncivil and intolerant language, particularly in the context of the migration issue. We further expected that social media users would be more uncivil and intolerant in the discussions under political posts of populist actors than non-populist actors.

Study IV (Navrátil & Kluknavská, 2023) explores protest mobilizations related to the 2015 migrant crisis in the post-communist Czech Republic and Slovakia. It compares migration-related protests in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, looking at both pro-refugee and anti-refugee mobilizations during the so-called long summer of migration of 2015. The study builds upon an assumption that despite dominating anti-refugee sentiments and similar historical and political backgrounds in the two countries, the mobilization patterns in the two countries were fairly different in both the scale and organization of migration-related mobilizations. To systematically explore and account for these variances, the study investigates the short-term political conditions that affected the patterns of migration-related protests, focusing on 1) key features of the national political environment – discursive opportunities and political space, and 2) movement/countermovement dynamics. It addresses the research gap in the literature by taking a cross-country comparative approach and considering the differences in pro-refugee and anti-refugee mobilizations in those countries that have been characterized by prevailing anti-refugee hostility.

The study builds on the original and unique dataset of migration-related protests during the most intense protests over migration in 2015. It showed how a different political

space and a different extent of openness of discursive opportunities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia and interactions between the anti-refugee movement and the solidarity countermovement played an important role in the timing and scale of protests and their organizers.

Study V (Voda, Kluknavská & Spáč, 2022) analyzes factors facilitating the electoral success of the Slovak extreme-right party ĽSNS by examining contextual explanations of electoral support during the 2010–2016 national elections. We examine the changes in the contextual characteristics that provided fertile ground for support for ĽSNS during the last three national elections (2010, 2012, and 2016). To analyze the changes in the structure of electoral support, we conducted an OLS regression analysis of the party's electoral results. Conducting regression analysis on aggregated data, we find that, during the 2010 and 2012 elections, the local presence of a Roma minority was important. In the 2016 elections, the party achieved success in more economically deprived micro-regions. We tested hypotheses about the presence of the Roma minority and economic deprivation, education, and the proportion of divorced people. Our results indicate that factors related to perceived ethnic threat alone seem insufficient to attract enough votes. Instead, socio-economic factors are also important for the propensity to vote for extreme-right parties.

For this reason, we interpret the results in the context of the extreme-right party's communication and favorable discursive opportunities. Opportunities refer to the cultural and discursive environment that provides incentives for or constraints on collective action, in this case, electoral mobilization. Our main argument is that the breakthrough was possible thanks to their increasingly anti-elite communication along with favorable contextual circumstances. The change in the structure of electoral support and the importance of factors related to socio-economic marginalization in the 2016 elections correspond with the changes in the party's increasingly anti-elite public communication and a discursive context favorable for mobilization on anti-establishment sentiments.

Study VI (Kluknavská & Caiani, 2021) examines populist radical right discourses on immigration in Central and Eastern Europe. Looking at the cases of the Czech Republic and

35

Slovakia between 1993 and 2014, the study applies frame analysis to different populist radical right parties' documents. The main goals are to analyze the presence, intensity, and forms of anti-immigrant frames employed by populist radical right parties and investigate how opportunity structures affect the construction of these populist radical right frames.

The main research questions are:

1. How economic and refugee crises have impacted (if any) the mobilization of the populist radical right?

2. Which forms has the opposition to the democratic and pluralistic system through emphasis on anti-immigrant discourse taken?

The chapter tries to understand the symbolic construction of the topic through analyses of saliency and content of issues and frames, which the populist radical right parties associate with immigrants and immigration. To examine the populist "us"-"them" dichotomy in the perception of the world, it looks at the symbolic role immigrants and "the people" play in the populist radical right discourses.

The chapter hypothesizes that the economic crisis, later followed by the refugee crisis, created opportunities for these groups to mobilize support and gain resonance through xenophobic and anti-establishment frames, and therefore, hostility towards immigrants and foreigners will increase. However, as the Czech Republic and Slovakia differ along some contextual factors, the main expectation is that the populist radical right in the two countries accentuates different aspects of their anti-immigrant discourse.

The results confirmed these expectations: populist radical right parties in both countries intensively focused on immigration issues and immigrants, creating nativist frames, which combine xenophobic and nationalist stances, but also heavily relying upon populist frames, ascribing blame for social problems to political elites; yet, these frames were visibly intensified during the economic and migrant crises the parties in the two countries emphasized different aspects of this anti-immigrant framing. In particular, while the Czech populist radical right related immigrants primarily to immigrant issues in general and stressed the idea of the immigrant threat, the Slovak populist radical right parties linked foreigners to other important societal topics (domestic political, cultural, etc.). They

suggested the destruction of the state and nation as a direct effect of increased immigration.

Study VII (Kluknavská, Bernhard & Boomgaarden, 2021) investigates claim-making on the so-called refugee crisis in the public sphere in Austria, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. The study is situated in the context of the 2015 refugee crisis. The situation produced polarized responses across the European Union and caused intensive media attention and public debate. Despite attempts of the European Union to establish a unified framework balancing humanitarian and sovereignty concerns related to refugee reception, the situation seemed to produce diverse and often contradictory discourses by the national elites, the public, and the media. Against this background, the study examines claims made by different political and public actors in the mediated discourse on the refugee situation during the first peak of the refugee crisis2 between August and October 2015. Because mass media can construct certain representations of migrants and act as a space for the participation of migrants in the public sphere, the study looks at the news discourse, which represents an important aspect of how issues are addressed in the different countries' public spheres.

      The main research questions are:

1. Who shaped the discourse on the crisis in national public realms?
2. How did the discourse take shape?
3. To what degree a common European discourse would emerge?

Actors' positions and claims in the mediated discourse during the first peak of the crisis between August and October 2015 are examined, focusing on how the crisis and refugees were talked about, who was given a voice to speak, what topics were associated with the crisis and how did actors frame their perspectives. The study draws on an analysis of 3,226 claims in a cross-country comparison. Results indicate institutionalization and a shift between security–humanitarian discourses and balanced threat–victim-framing. The findings suggest that the debate was confined to national public spheres, with the first signs of a common European discourse. This study contributes to the literature on the

representation of migration in the media from a cross-national perspective within the context of the recent crisis.

Study VIII (Kluknavská & Hruška, 2019) examines political communication of the extreme right on social media in Central and Eastern Europe, presenting the case of the political party Kotleba – People's Party Our Slovakia (ĽSNS) on Facebook between 2013 and 2015. It investigates the party's visibility and content of their communication and the characteristics of active Facebook supporters in the context of political and discursive opportunity structures.

The following questions guide the research:

1. How intensive is the communication of the party, and to what extent does it engage in enemy-making on social media?

2. Who are the most visible perpetrators and victims of perceived social problems, and which issues and frames does the party apply to communicate these problems in its social media discourse?

3. What defines fans of the party in terms of their interests on social media?

The study analyzes the period between July 2013 and March 2015, which covers three different elections (regional, local, and European). The activity of the ĽSNS serves as an interesting case, as what was previously an electorally unsuccessful political pariah made a breakthrough in regional (2013) and national (2016) politics, stirring a reaction of surprise among societal and political actors.

The study shows that the Slovak extreme-right party ĽSNS proactively leveraged Facebook's popularity to build populist and nativist frames, creating a strong sense of "Othering" of perceived enemies. It also utilized the social networking site to organize and build a personal presence. This social media function allowed them to disseminate extreme right discourses and connect with a like-minded network of supporters who were receptive to anti-elite, nationalistic, and "alternative" content. "Alternative" sources are defined as sites that mimic serious news to disseminate misinformation or disinformation. The results are discussed in light of opportunities, showing how political and discursive context allowed

the party to exploit anti-minority and anti-elite public attitudes to construct ethno-nationalist and populist discourse.

Study IX (Kluknavská & Smolík, 2016) presents electoral developments and mobilization issues of the extreme right, focusing on the changes in the discourse and framing strategies of the extreme right political parties in Slovakia concerning their electoral fortunes from 1993 to 2016. The dynamic character of the extreme right in Slovakia manifests itself in the ability to raise special issues and relay them to potential voters. These mobilizing issues have changed in more than two decades, and their appeal could be ascribed to political context, real-world developments and key events (immigration, accession to the European Union, the economic and refugee crises), public attitudes towards ethnic minorities and tolerance towards xenophobic ideas, or internal processes within the extreme right parties. Taking into account these opportunity structures, the study asks:

1. What changes occurred in the extreme right mobilization issues over the last two decades?

2. How have these changes related to their electoral (mis)fortunes?

The main argument is that after the fall of communism, particularly during the transition to democracy in the 1990s and partially later in the 2000s, the extreme right parties mainly focused on issues related to the establishment of independent Slovakia and later on issues of national sovereignty and were successful mainly against the factors they considered as threatening to this independence. Their electoral achievements were affected primarily by internal party stability. In the late 2000s, extreme right parties adopted a strategy bridging nationalistic, populist, and xenophobic frames, which were successfully reflected in favorable opportunities. Thus, their electoral results increased during the economic and European refugee crises. Several downturns in electoral gains were caused mainly by extreme right party internal problems and strong disagreements in the leadership. This suggests a demand for the extreme right ideology exists in Slovak society, and the extreme right has been able to mobilize potential voters through strategic framing.

Study X (Kroon, Kluknavská, Vliegenthart & Boomgaarden, 2016) investigates media framing of Roma and explains variations in how European news media frame Roma in diagnostic and prognostic terms. The study applies quantitative content analysis on 825 news articles from newspapers in the Netherlands, Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and the United Kingdom from 2010 to 2012. Building on the knowledge that media representations of minorities are not stable but vary across time and space, we trace the influence of content-specific, temporal, and country-level factors.

This is against a background that news coverage is argued to matter to explain public attitudes and beliefs towards minorities: How news media evaluate immigrants and minorities influences people's willingness to categorize others and may contribute to the reproduction of prejudice and racism and the maintenance of ethnic dominance and inequality in society. This study fills the gap in understanding the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of news coverage of Roma, in particular, from a cross-national perspective, taking into consideration both Eastern and Western European countries. The main questions of this study are:

1. How is the Roma minority framed in the news across European countries?
2. How can potential differences in such frame representation be accounted for?

This study draws upon a content analysis of both popular and quality newspapers in two Central–Eastern (the Czech Republic and Slovakia) and three Western (Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) European countries in the time period 2010–2012. It draws on an issue-specific approach to framing theory to offer a detailed insight into the prominence and valence of news coverage about Roma. It argues that such an approach might be most informative to establish factors underlying news representations of Roma.

Results show that attention for Roma is clustered around key events and differs considerably between countries. Based on multilevel modeling, our analyses of frame variation indicate a duality in using frames, with Roma being both portrayed as victims and perpetrators. Variations in these portrayals could be ascribed mainly to sources and

40

newspaper types. This study contributes to our understanding of the factors that account for problem-emphasizing portrayals of Roma in European countries.

2.4   Overview of methodological design of studies

These studies employ a mixed-method design, utilizing both quantitative and qualitative analyses, including textual quantitative content analysis, frame analysis, claims analysis, network analysis, protest event analysis, and the examination of electoral data. The next chapter overviews data, methods, and analyses applied in the studies.

The data for **Study I** consists of a corpus of social media posts from the Czech parliamentary party leaders' Facebook fan pages. The sample includes nine party leaders, of which two were leaders of governing parties, and seven were leaders of opposition parties. It utilizes the CrowdTangle data collection tool to download all Facebook posts (N = 10,207) by party leaders during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to February 2021. The data downloaded include the messages that politicians shared on their pages and people's reactions (e.g., love, sadness, anger) to these posts. To identify the political message elements, we conducted a claims analysis, a form of quantitative content analysis, of the leaders' Facebook posts. To keep the coding manageable, we coded a stratified random sample (25%) for each politician (n = 2,549) to cover the whole period. For testing the formulated hypotheses, we relied on negative binomial regression analysis as the dependent variable contains overdispersed count data, thus with the variance being larger than the mean.

Study II's data consists of a corpus of tweets from Trump's private Twitter account (@realDonaldTrump). We utilized the Twitter data collection and downloaded all original tweets made in our research period via the online database Trump Twitter Archive (https://www.thetrumparchive.com/). Our analysis includes 315 original tweets. We coded all tweets for the presence of an explicit evaluation of another actor. We utilized claims analysis, a form of quantitative content analysis, including both quantitative and qualitative variables. The analysis was comprised of descriptive quantitative analysis, supplemented with qualitative examples.

41

The data for **Study III** consists of a corpus of Facebook posts from the political parties in the Czech Republic between 2013 and 2020. Our sample includes political parties represented in the Chamber of Deputies at least once during our time frame. Our final sample contains 798 migration-related posts and corresponding 6,263 comments. We drew this sample from all Facebook posts (n = 60,528) of political parties during the time frame (2013–2020). We sampled it based on keywords related to migration and refugee crisis: refugee, migrant, migration, immigration, or asylum. We included all the migration posts created by political parties (except for the SPD party, where we randomly sampled 300 posts to keep the data among parties comparable), in which migration issue was a dominant topic. We conducted a quantitative content analysis of political parties' Facebook posts and comments to identify the populist message elements and the presence of incivility and intolerance in the comments. We relied on binary logistic regression to test the formulated hypotheses and understand the research questions.

Study IV builds on a protest event analysis. To build the protest event data set, we selected and coded news articles about pro- and anti-refugee protests in 2015. The time frame covers the period both before and after the intensification of the crisis in the summer months of 2015 – the peak of the European migrant crisis that began in 2014. We identified 72 migration-related protest events: 60 in the Czech Republic and 12 in Slovakia. To avoid missing values and unpack clusters of multiple events, we triangulated data and searched social media and other news databases (Facebook events/organizer profiles, YouTube videos of participants/organizers, and the Anopress database). Wherever possible (48 Czech events and nine Slovak events), we recorded major claims raised at the event and explored its framing. To compare the size of protests in the two countries, we used Tilly's index of protest magnitude based on the multiplied attendance, duration, and frequency of collective mobilization for a particular month and country. We also used qualitative case studies, for which we selected two protest days per country, representing mobilization peaks with interaction between anti-immigrant and solidarity mobilizations.

Study V uses regression analysis on aggregate electoral results and socio-economic data. It relies on aggregated data related to the geographical level of so-called microregions, which

are considered units of analysis. As the basis for analysis (electoral results), we used the official results of national elections provided by the Slovak Statistical Office. Due to the specific conditions, data about the Roma minority were gathered from the Atlas of Roma Communities 2013. The variable "purchasing power" is based on data provided by the company Gfk Incoma about household income in municipalities and indicates the average income of inhabitants in microregions in thousands of euros per year per household. The remaining socio-economic data were based on the census data. The formulated hypotheses were tested by OLS linear regression analysis.

Study VI uses frame analysis applied to the data drawn from documents produced by populist radical right parties, i.e., election programs or party manifestos, articles in party newspapers or magazines, statements (party-produced opinion articles, speeches published on the party's Website). Data were analyzed according to a standardized codebook, which was developed in repeated inductive pre-testing. The codebook, which we used for the systematic coding of data, includes qualitative and quantitative variables. The analysis led to a total of 6,832 (diagnostic and/or prognostic) claims. The final sample on the immigrant topic consists of 251 claims. When we filter claims in which immigrants act as enemies, the sample includes 453 claims. The analysis was comprised of descriptive quantitative analysis, supplemented with qualitative examples.

The data for **Study VII** are derived from a claims analysis of 642 articles on the refugee crisis that appeared in nine newspapers and three TV channels in Austria, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic over two months (61 days) from 15 August 2015 to 15 October 2015. In the selected time frame, we found 9,176 articles (Austria: n = 6,167; Czech Republic: n = 1,667; Slovakia: n = 1,342). From this sample, we selected the news articles (related to the crisis) in which refugees were the main topic. Sports pages, culture, history, celebrity articles, commentaries, and interviews were excluded from the sample. For our final sample, we coded the longest article (in terms of word count) per medium per day. For each article, we coded the first ten claims: 647 articles led to the identification of 3,226 claims. We reported overall results utilizing descriptive statistics and illustrated these results by providing relevant quotes of original claims where appropriate.

Study VIII applies frame analysis to analyze extreme-right discourse and also qualitative indicators (the number of "likes," "comments," or "shares") to analyze fans' resonance with the party's posts. Data were downloaded using Facebook API. The final coding sample thus consists of 547 claims. It comprises all public content in the form of Facebook posts that the party and its leader communicated on their Facebook pages between July 2013 and March 2015. Each post was coded for a claim, with a claim being a unit of analysis. To contextualize the fans' involvement on social media, we look at the daily numbers of fans, which were downloaded using the social-media monitoring tool ZoomSphere. We reported overall results employing descriptive statistics and the quantitative method called Normalized Social Distance (NSD), which calculates distances between groups.

Study IX uses data from electoral results of the extreme right political parties in Slovakia over 20 years at local, regional, national, and European levels gathered through the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. To analyze the development of extreme right mobilization issues over time, we used qualitative content analysis of parties' election programs and party manifestos, articles in party newspapers or magazines, and statements found in party-produced opinion articles or speeches published on the party's Website.

The data for **Study X** are derived from a content analysis of 825 articles on Roma that appeared in 15 newspapers in the Netherlands, Germany, United Kingdom, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic between 2010 and 2012. We searched the newspapers with the terms Roma, Gypsies, Travellers, or Sinti (n = 7,909). From this sample, we selected only articles with the main focus on topics related to Roma (n = 3,310). These articles primarily dealt with Roma-related topics in the first paragraph(s). Articles in which Roma were only mentioned (n = 4,599) were excluded from the analysis. Second, the sample of articles that primarily report about Roma was divided into two categories. We distinguish hard news articles (n = 2,502), which deal with news about current affairs, and soft news articles (n = 808), which encompass news about Roma culture and history. For the framing analysis, a random sample of hard news articles mainly devoted to Roma was selected (n = 825). We developed our measurement instrument during a qualitative inductive pre-study on a sample of 100 news articles across all newspapers. Consequently, we coded the data in a

quantitative frame analysis, which is a form of content analysis. We conducted mixed linear regression models with random intercepts.

13 Conclusion

Populist political communication is a growing area of research, drawing on insights from political science, communication research, and media studies. This habilitation investigated four main dimensions of the multifaceted dynamics of populist communication during times of crisis. The goal was to present specific contributions of selected studies that utilize diverse concepts, arguments, and datasets to explore and analyze the factors that contribute to the emergence, spread, and effect of populist communication in response to crises and other contexts. The thesis focused on four main areas of influence, illuminating the content and stylistic characteristics of populist communication, the role of various political and public actors in the construction and dissemination of populist messages, the role of crisis and different political and discursive contexts, and the public responses and reactions to populist communication.

To engage with these areas of populist communication and present the contributions of selected studies, I will synthesize and discuss the key findings from the studies included in this thesis. This section is categorized into two main areas of interest. The first subsection presents the key conclusions, which it discusses with the literature and offers research implications within the four areas. The second subsection focuses on presenting the limitations of the research and avenues for future research.

13.1 Discussion, key conclusions, and implications

In the area of research focusing on **populism as an ideology and a communication phenomenon**, we developed a conceptual framework for investigating the post-truth discourse, which is occupied with the political contestation of "truth" between claimants in the public sphere. We brought methodological advancements in the form of the adaptation of claims-making for the analysis of how actors relativize the truth and use discourses of untruthfulness to attack their opponents and construct their versions of reality.

Theoretically, we utilized the argued affinity between populism and post-truth to conceptualize truth contestation in two aspects: (1) the antagonistic anti-elite

46

constructions of accusations of creating and spreading false information and lies, (2) the emphasis on emotionality and negativity over facts and expertise. Exploring the affinity between populism and post-truth communication, we demonstrated to what extent post-truth claims are characterized by populist anti-elite messages and style. The antagonistic positions of populism, which present a binary and moral clash between the "pure" people and the "corrupt" elite (Mudde, 2004), connect post-truth politics to truth evaluations. In post-truth politics, these conflicting positions towards elites manifest in accusations of untruthfulness and the construction of the "real" truth, through which actors attempt to contest expert knowledge and empirical evidence (Waisbord, 2018). Our results also confirm the findings of previous studies (e.g., Hameleers, 2020), which suggest that truth relativization stresses negativity and emotionalization in disregarding incongruent truths.

Such an approach also served as a basis for a conceptual framework to study truth contestation: we defined key content and stylistic characteristics of post-truth communication and translated these characteristics into empirically measurable categories. Strategic action expressed with a claim including identification of subject and object actors (claimants and those actors who are accused), a form of expression, issue, and the justification given helps to pinpoint negotiations and re-negotiations of the substance and consequences of relativization of the truth and truthfulness in the public debate.

Overall, our analysis in this area of research established that the discourses of untruthfulness can be a viable conceptual approach, and a post-truth claim can be a valuable tool for measuring the contestation of truth in contemporary politics. These antagonistic and emotional takes on politics discredit the accuser's perceived opponents, help to delegitimize arguments of opposed political sides and encourage people to choose their own reality, where beliefs trump facts (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). As a result, post-truth communication may increase societal polarization and decrease public trust in democratic institutions (Hameleers & Minihold, 2022). One of the potential negative implications is thus a decrease in the legitimacy of and trust in the opponent and an increase in the legitimacy of and trust in the political challenger.

In the area of **the role of populist actors**, we analyzed and discussed the utilization of populist communication elements by populist and populist radical right actors, showing how these actors consistently used nativist, populist, and authoritarian frames and claims to gain legitimacy, relevance, and public support.

Focusing on the comprehensive analysis of populist radical right communication through the case of the political party ĽSNS in Slovakia, we showed how the ĽSNS proactively leveraged Facebook's popularity to build populist anti-elite and nativist frames. This created a strong discourse based on the "Othering" of perceived enemies, which is characteristic of ideology combining ethno-nationalist xenophobia and anti-establishment populism (Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007). This way, the party pursued a social media communication strategy that offered a personal presence with the informative character of their activities (Kruikemeier et al., 2013) and unfiltered dissemination of their worldview (Krämer, 2017), which gave them an advantage in the then-emerging hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013). In further research, we uncovered how such communication strategies and their adaptive communicative changes in time, intended to maximize public support, led to electoral increases of the populist radical right party and its breakthrough into national politics.

We also examined how the populist radical right communication is disseminated through networks of kindred supporters (Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017; Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, et al., 2017), suggesting a relationship between active fans of populist radical right and consumption of nationalistic, anti-elite, and "alternative" information. Especially the inclination to "alternative" information is a worrisome finding, given the disconnection of the public from institutions of mainstream media and politics (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). As frustration and trust in representative institutions decline, the populist discourse can facilitate communication characteristic of spreading untrue information, misinformation, and disinformation (Ylä-Anttila, 2018), and people can become trustful of pro-attitudinal media and distrustful of scientific consensus or mainstream media (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Van Aelst et al., 2017). This allows the populist radical right to attract voters dissatisfied with mainstream politics and established media through networks of ideologically close supporters. In such an environment, the populist radical right presents

itself as an alternative platform for sharing "the truth" about the world and as legitimate and trustworthy.

Looking at the role of populist actors, we investigated the extreme right parties' mobilization issues in the context of adapting their communicative offline and online strategies, building upon longitudinal data between 1993 and 2016. We focused on the changes in extreme right framing strategies employed by extreme right political parties in Slovakia over time and interpreted them in the context of their electoral results. Our main argument was that initially (in the 1990s), extreme right parties primarily focused on national sovereignty issues, and their success largely stemmed from rallying against groups perceived to threaten this independence. However, by the late 2000s, there was a noticeable shift in the extreme right's approach when they began combining nationalist, populist, and xenophobic narratives into a cohesive strategy.

Examining the discourses of populist and populist radical right actors, the studies included in this thesis also examined particular issues created and disseminated by populist radical right parties and populist politicians. For instance, the investigation of populist radical right framing of immigration and immigrants, analyzing the presence, intensity, and forms of anti-immigrant frames from a longitudinal perspective, uncovered the symbolic construction of immigration through populist "us"-"them" dichotomy and nativist appeals, which aligns with populist radical right discourses across other countries (Akkerman, 2012; Rydgren, 2008; Schmuck & Matthes, 2017; Skenderovic, 2007). On the one hand, the populist radical right created nativist frames, combining xenophobic and nationalist stances. On the other hand, it constructed populist frames, ascribing blame for social problems to political elites. Further, examining the populist rhetoric, the presented studies found how populist political actors relativize truthfulness and use accusations of untruth-telling as part of anti-elite populist attacks to delegitimize their opponents or political and public actors, including populists (Boler & Davis, 2018; Hameleers, 2020b; Hannan, 2018; Harsin, 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2017; Sengul, 2019), or how they frame Roma minority, presenting them, particularly in terms of perpetrators of social and other injustices (Meeusen & Jacobs, 2017; Messing & Bernáth, 2017; Schneeweis, 2018; Vermeersch, 2003, 2012; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018).

49

In the research area focusing on **opportunities for populist communication**, the studies included in this thesis showed how communication is not isolated from its environment but rather intertwined with and affected by particular social and political environments. In the contexts of migration and refugee crisis, we showed how short-term political conditions affected the patterns of migration-related mobilization, arguing how a different political space and a different extent of openness of discursive opportunities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia played an important role in the timing and scale of protests as well as their claims and frames diffused in the public sphere. Similarly, the context of the immigration issue and refugee crisis affected the communication of populist radical right parties, too. The parties intensified the construction and spread of their populist and nativist frames during the refugee crisis, suggesting the idea of the immigrant threat or the destruction of the state and nation as a direct effect of increased immigration. This aligns with other studies suggesting how the populist radical right convincingly creates a sense of crisis and politicizes immigration issues (Gessler & Hunger, 2022; Hinterleitner et al., 2023)

A comprehensive analysis of populist radical right communication and their electoral results uncovered how opportunities that were available for their symbolic and electoral mobilization offered these parties favorable context for their breakthrough. In the first step, we showed how open political and discursive opportunities allowed the parties to exploit anti-minority and anti-elite public attitudes to construct ethno-nationalist and populist discourse. In combination with the social media environment, which creates a technological opportunity for these actors to bypass traditional and established media gatekeepers, the favorable context allowed them to effectively distribute populist and xenophobic messages through networks of supporters and potential adherents (Caiani & Parenti, 2009, 2013; Esser et al., 2017).

In particular, we showed how crises (Loch & Norocel, 2015) and a lack of political representation through ideologically similar parties in power increased the saliency of the populist radical right's framing of their perceived enemies. Similarly, we argued that political discontent and political mistrust (e.g., Norris, 2005) affected the content of frames (Caiani et al., 2012; Caiani & della Porta, 2011). This is in line with research which suggests that populist radical right parties effectively use populist frames to attract voters who

distrust political institutions and who share high anti-establishment attitudes (Caiani & della Porta, 2011; Ziller & Schübel, 2015). These circumstances and specific social media conditions allowed them to also connect with specific "like-minded" groups (Jacobs & Spierings, 2016; Klinger & Svensson, 2015), avoid criticism from traditional media or elites (Krämer, 2017) and at the same time, employ populist and nativist discourse attacking various perceived enemies within networks of kindred supporters and followers (Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017; Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, et al., 2017).

In the next step, we showed how favorable opportunities along with populist radical right strategic communication affected their electoral results and facilitated their electoral success. Examining the changes in the contextual characteristics that provided fertile ground for support for ĽSNS during 2010, 2012, and 2016 general elections, the study argued how the change in the basis of political competition, the self-reinforced anti-elite public image of the populist radical right party and the 2015 refugee crisis opened up opportunities for ĽSNS to mobilize on anti-establishment and anti-elite sentiments and receive higher electoral gains in 2016, which was structured differently than in previous elections. The study suggests an influence of political and discursive opportunities, which were favorable for ĽSNS to put forward anti-elite and nativist communication to attract voters dissatisfied with politics and minority issues. The public perception of minorities and political dissatisfaction were rather stable and were thus open for electoral mobilization. For instance, the public perception of the Roma minority continued to be negative, with the majority of the population reported having some form of negative feeling toward this minority (Bútorová & Gyarfášová, 2008). Similarly, the media presentation of the Roma, often portrayed in terms of a threat to the majority society, could offer viable ground for populist radical right symbolic and electoral mobilization (Feischmidt & Hervik, 2015; Kroon et al., 2016).

Importantly, the 2015 refugee crisis brought topics such as security and economics into the public discourse in connection with the immigration issue and highlighted its importance also in countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Kluknavská et al., 2021). Public opinion toward refugees was rather negative, and elite discourse framed the public debate around security measures such as closing borders

51

or police and army presence (e.g., Androvičová, 2016). Moreover, with the intensification of the crisis, the perceived importance of how the government should handle the crisis increased (Loch & Norocel, 2015), and public dissatisfaction with the crisis management created opportunities for parties mobilizing on anti-establishment sentiments. This shows the importance of supply-side arguments in the study of populist radical right symbolic and electoral mobilization (Koopmans & Statham, 2010; Mudde, 2007; Rooduijn, 2015) and offers an important perspective specifically on how political and discursive contexts affect communication and results of these parties, politicians, and movements.

In the area of research investigating **the impact of populist communication**, the presented studies included in the habilitation thesis focused on two important communicative aspects related to populism: post-truth communication elements and incivility. One empirical study focused on investigating the effect of two possible communication features and two context characteristics on emotional emoji reactions of users on Facebook: uncivil and post-truth message characteristics and affiliation with a populist party and the COVID-19 crisis. The study argues that while some users may use emotional emoji reactions independently of the post's content, the results show that employing incivility or post-truth characteristics in social media messages pays off in terms of eliciting people's emotional emoji responses.

These findings highlight the importance of emotional popularity cues for political actors who try to adjust their party communication to generate the desired responses from their adherents, especially during crises full of fear and uncertainties, when people rely on political leaders' statements (Verbalyte et al., 2022). However, employing disrespectful communication to strategically increase the visibility of their communication and thus increase their own perceived relevance among social media users (Kosmidis & Theocharis, 2020; Mutz & Reeves, 2005) can have mixed consequences for political and public discussion. While it can have negative consequences for the civility of the discussion as such, the use of uncivil language may engage people in opinion exchange by arousing emotional response, which is beneficial for a healthy democracy (e.g., Herbst, 2010; Kosmidis & Theocharis, 2020).

The study further uncovered that uncivil and post-truth message features are individually likely to receive more emotional emoji reactions from users, but attacking the truthfulness of the opponent seems to elicit more reactions when uncivil language is not present in their social media posts. This finding can have negative consequences: questioning truthfulness while adhering to norms of respectful behavior can effectively challenge the opponent's claims and convince others of the challenger's legitimacy.

Moreover, applying uncivil and post-truth communication seems to be a good strategy, particularly for non-populist politicians. This finding is understandable, as incivility arouses greater interest, amusement, and outrage among their followers (Sydnor, 2019, 2020). However, it can have negative societal consequences by spilling over to other social media debates (Eberl et al., 2020) and, more broadly, into public discourse. It can also foster societal polarization between those who feel right and those who are wrong (Hameleers & Minihold, 2022) and make it harder to differentiate between actual reality and the one that is created by political figures.

Inquiring about the influence of contextual circumstances, findings suggest that populist leaders received more emotional emoji reactions from their social media followers than non-populist leaders (Jacobs et al., 2020), and the COVID-19 pandemic played a role in elevating emotional emoji reactions to pandemic-related political messages. The periods of national lockdowns and posts bringing up the COVID-19 issue increased the emotional emoji reactions of social media users, showing how people's emotions in response to unprecedented and uncertain situations are important aspects to consider in managing the crisis and getting people to comply with government measures.

The second study, which focuses on the impact of populist communication, explored the relationship between the use of populist communication and the use of uncivil and intolerant rhetoric by social media users. Focusing on the communication in migration-related social media posts by populist and non-populist political actors, the results indicate that while different elements of populist communication bring mixed results to the responses in online discussions, the social media posts created by populist political parties are positively associated with increased online incivility and intolerance. In particular, the targeting of out-groups in political posts related to migration issues increased the chances

of intolerant language being used by social media users. This finding suggests that the ostracization of the "Others" and the creation of a perception of unjust favoritism by elites (Bos et al., 2020; Engesser, Ernst, et al., 2017; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007) can be regarded as an important political strategy in heightening users' hostile verbal responses in the context of contentious political issues. However, the presence of people-centrism in political posts related to migration issues decreased the likelihood of social media users utilizing incivility in their comments, which can potentially have a de-escalating effect.

Importantly, the study found that the populist character of political parties plays a significant role in the relationship between political messages and the incivility and intolerance used by social media users, suggesting an influence of the narratives employed by populist actors and the alignment of social media users with the populist ideology.

These findings have significant implications for understanding the potential influence of populist messages on social media and its consequences for democratic societies, highlighting their relevance in addressing and mitigating crises beyond the migration crisis, such as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies. In particular, incivility on social media can negatively influence political attitudes and behavior. For instance, online incivility can lead to a decrease in political trust (Van't Riet & Van Stekelenburg, 2022), have detrimental effects on deliberation (Lück & Nardi, 2019), undermine perceptions of media (Anderson et al., 2018), or increase polarization (Lee et al., 2019; Skytte, 2021). Even though uncivil language can spark a discussion among people and be beneficial for constructive exchanges (Rossini, 2022), intolerance can lower the quality of the discussion as a whole (Prochazka et al., 2018).

13.2 Limitations and future research

Investigating **populism as an ideology and a communication phenomenon**, we focused on the Twitter communication of Donald Trump as a prime example of post-truth politics to illustrate the employability of our approach via a pilot study on the longest period of shutdown in US history (22 December 2018 – 25 January 2019). Because Trump's communication has been found to be defining the post-truth discourse as such (Fischer, 2019), our pilot analysis can be regarded as an easy case. Nevertheless, other studies (e.g.,

(Egelhofer et al., 2021) suggest that Trump's discursive attacks on journalists and other political actors and their legitimacy constitute only "the tip of the political iceberg" (Farkas & Schou, 2019, p. 2) and accusations of untruthfulness go across political communication of various political and public actors from different parts of the political spectrum. This offers interesting empirical avenues to capture how accusations of untruthfulness are used as communicative tools and the potential to further establish the post-truth approach's validity. A post-truth claim as a methodological tool could also be used to map the post-truth discourse networks to explore which actors discuss which topics or how the accusers relate to those being accused.

Focusing on **the role of populist actors** brought many important insights into the utilization of populist communication elements by populist and populist radical right actors. One of the limitations is the focus on single or multiple case studies. While these studies bring important knowledge into the research (mostly) on Central and Europe, future studies could engage in larger-scale comparative analyses to understand different patterns across the globe. Future studies could also focus on the role of populist actors in creating and disseminating political messages concerning a wider range of issues, considering how the populist rhetoric connects to contentious issues beyond cases such as immigration or minority issues. Regarding post-truth communication, future studies could look at factors that condition relativization of truthfulness in the communication of populist versus non-populist politicians, focusing specifically on salient and polarizing societal and political issues (De Bruycker & Rooduijn, 2021).

In the area of research focusing on **opportunities for populist communication**, studies included in the habilitation thesis largely dealt with the influence of the refugee crisis. Future studies could look beyond immigration issues and consider other crisis conditions and their consequences on the communication patterns of political and public actors. Future studies could also examine how opportunities affect populist communication in comparative settings or focus on a large-scale investigation.

Lastly, in the area of research investigating **the impact of populist communication**, the limitation of one of the studies included in this thesis is that it focuses on overall emotional emoji reactions to political messages. While it makes sense, especially during

profound crises that produce potentially overlapping positively and negatively valenced responses, future studies could disentangle specific reactions such as anger, hate, or love. The second study's limitation is that it focused solely on the migration issue, which served as the primary context for investigating the relationship between populism and online incivility and intolerance. Future studies could consider incorporating a more diverse range of public and policy issues or political contexts to understand this relationship better. Additionally, future research should focus also on comparison across different countries and consider temporal dynamics over time.

Based on manual content analysis, both studies are also restricted regarding their sample size. Given the rapid development in automated content analysis and the fast-developing field of computational text analysis, future studies could use automated approaches to analyze the content of political communication. This would allow studies to examine the different media platforms over an extended period and investigate communication and its effects beyond the crisis context. Studies could also consider including visual aspects in investigating political communication and its influence on social media users' emotional reactions.

13.3 References

Akkerman, T. (2012). Comparing Radical Right Parties in Government: Immigration and Integration Policies in Nine Countries (1996–2010). West European Politics, 35(3), 511–529. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2012.665738

Anderson, A. A., Yeo, S. K., Brossard, D., Scheufele, D. A., & Xenos, M. A. (2018). Toxic talk: How online incivility can undermine perceptions of media. International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 30(1), 156–168.

Androvičová, J. (2016). The Migration and Refugee Crisis in Political Discourse in Slovakia: Institutionalized Securitization and Moral Panic. Auc Studia Territorialia, 16(2), 39–64. https://doi.org/10.14712/23363231.2017.11

Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. European Journal of Communication, 33(2), 122–139. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760317

Boler, M., & Davis, E. (2018). The affective politics of the "post-truth" era: Feeling rules and networked subjects. Emotion, Space and Society, 27(May), 75–85. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2018.03.002

Bos, L., Schemer, C., Corbu, N., Hameleers, M., Andreadis, I., Schulz, A., Schmuck, D., Reinemann, C., & Fawzi, N. (2020). The effects of populism as a social identity frame on persuasion and mobilisation: Evidence from a 15-country experiment. European Journal of Political Research, 59(1), 3–24.

Bútorová, Z., & Gyarfášová, O. (2008). Verejná mienka. In Slovensko 2007. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti. Inštitút pre verejné otázky.

Caiani, M., & della Porta, D. (2011). The elitist populism of the extreme right: A frame analysis of extreme right-wing discourses in Italy and Germany. Acta Politica, 46(2), 180–202. https://doi.org/10.1057/ap.2010.28

Caiani, M., Della Porta, D., & Wagemann, C. (2012). Mobilizing on the extreme right: Germany, Italy, and the United States. Oxford University Press.

Caiani, M., & Parenti, L. (2009). The Dark Side of the Web: Italian Right-Wing Extremist Groups and the Internet. South European Society and Politics, 14(3), 273–294. https://doi.org/10.1080/13608740903342491

Caiani, M., & Parenti, L. (2013). European and American extreme right groups and the Internet. Ashgate.

Chadwick, A. (2013). The hybrid media system: Politics and power. Oxford University Press.

Chouliaraki, L., & Zaborowski, R. (2017). Voice and community in the 2015 refugee crisis: A content analysis of news coverage in eight European countries. International Communication Gazette, 79(6–7), 613–635. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048517727173

De Bruycker, I., & Rooduijn, M. (2021). The People's Champions? Populist Communication as a Contextually Dependent Political Strategy. Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 98(3), 896–922. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077699021998648

Eberl, J.-M., Tolochko, P., Jost, P., Heidenreich, T., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2020). What's in a post? How sentiment and issue salience affect users' emotional reactions on Facebook. Journal of Information Technology & Politics, 17(1), 48–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/19331681.2019.1710318

Egelhofer, J. L., Aaldering, L., & Lecheler, S. (2021). Delegitimizing the media?: Analyzing politicians' media criticism on social media. Journal of Language and Politics, 20(5), 653–675. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.20081.ege

Engesser, S., Ernst, N., Esser, F., & Büchel, F. (2017). Populism and social media: How politicians spread a fragmented ideology. Information Communication and Society, 20(8), 1109–1126. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1207697

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 and Society, 20(9), 1347–1364. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1329333

Esser, F., Stepinska, A., & Hopmann, D. N. (2017). Populism and the media: Cross-national findings and perspectives. In T. Aalberg, C. de Vreese, J. Strömbäck, F. Esser, & Carsten Reinemann (Eds.), Populist political communication in Europe (pp. 365–380). Routledge.

Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2019). Post-truth, fake news and democracy: Mapping the politics of falsehood. Routledge.

Feischmidt, M., & Hervik, P. (2015). Mainstreaming the extreme: Intersecting challenges from the far right in Europe. Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics, 1(1).

Fischer, F. (2019). Knowledge politics and post-truth in climate denial: On the social construction of alternative facts. Critical Policy Studies, 13(2), 133–152.

Gessler, T., & Hunger, S. (2022). How the refugee crisis and radical right parties shape party competition on immigration. Political Science Research and Methods, 10(3), 524–544.

Hameleers, M. (2020). We Are Right, They Are Wrong: The Antagonistic Relationship Between Populism and Discourses of (Un)truthfulness. disClosure : A Journal of Social Theory, 29.

Hameleers, M., & Minihold, S. (2022). Constructing Discourses on (Un)truthfulness: Attributions of Reality , Misinformation , and Disinformation by Politicians in a Comparative Social Media Setting. Communication Research, 49(8), 1176–1199. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650220982762

Hannan, J. (2018). Trolling ourselves to death? Social media and post-truth politics. European Journal of Communication. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760323

Harsin, J. (2018). Post-Truth Populism: The French Anti-Gender Theory Movement and Cross-Cultural Similarities. Communication, Culture and Critique, 11(1), 35–52. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcx017

Herbst, S. (2010). Rude democracy: Civility and incivility in American politics. Temple University Press.

Hinterleitner, M., Kammermeier, V., & Moffitt, B. (2023). How the populist radical right exploits crisis: Comparing the role of proximity in the COVID-19 and refugee crises in Germany. West European Politics, 1–26.

Jacobs, K., Sandberg, L., & Spierings, N. (2020). Twitter and Facebook: Populists' double-barreled gun? New Media & Society, 22(4), 611–633.

Jacobs, K., & Spierings, N. (2016). Social media, parties, and political inequalities. Springer.

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. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00690.x

Klinger, U., & Svensson, J. (2015). The emergence of network media logic in political communication: A theoretical approach. New Media and Society, 17(8), 1241–1257. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814522952

Kluknavská, A., Bernhard, J., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2021). Claiming the Crisis: Mediated Public Debates about the Refugee Crisis in Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Journal of Refugee Studies, 34(1), 241–263. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fez022

Koopmans, R., & Statham, P. (2010). The making of a European public sphere: Media discourse and political contention. Cambridge University Press.

Kosmidis, S., & Theocharis, Y. (2020). Can Social Media Incivility Induce Enthusiasm?: Evidence from Survey Experiments. Public Opinion Quarterly, 84(S1), 284–308. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfaa014

Krämer, B. (2017). Populist online practices: The function of the Internet in right-wing populism. Information Communication and Society, 20(9), 1293–1309. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328520

Kroon, A. C., Kluknavska, A., Vliegenthart, R., & Boomgaarden, H. G. (2016). Victims or perpetrators? Explaining media framing of Roma across Europe. European Journal of Communication, 31(4), 375–392.

Kruikemeier, S., van Noort, G., Vliegenthart, R., & de Vreese, C. H. (2013). Getting closer: The effects of personalized and interactive online political communication. European Journal of Communication, 28(1), 53–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323112464837

Lee, F. L., Liang, H., & Tang, G. K. (2019). Online incivility, cyberbalkanization, and the dynamics of opinion polarization during and after a mass protest event. International Journal of Communication, 13, 20.

Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond Misinformation: Understanding and Coping with the "Post-Truth" Era. Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, 6(4), 353–369.

Loch, D., & Norocel, O. C. (2015). The Populist Radical Right in Europe: A Xenophobic Voice in the Global Economic Crisis. In H.-J. Trenz, C. Ruzza, & V. Guiraudon (Eds.), Europe's prolonged crisis: THe making or the unmaking of a political Union (pp. 251–269). Palgrave Macmillan.

Lück, J., & Nardi, C. (2019). Incivility in user comments on online news articles: Investigating the role of opinion dissonance for the effects of incivility on attitudes, emotions and the willingness to participate. SCM Studies in Communication and Media, 8(3), 311–337.

Meeusen, C., & Jacobs, L. (2017). Television news content of minority groups as an intergroup context indicator of differences between target-specific prejudices. Mass Communication and Society, 20(2), 213–240.

Messing, V., & Bernáth, G. (2017). Disempowered by the media: Causes and consequences of the lack of media voice of Roma communities. Identities, 24(6), 650–667.

Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. Government and Opposition, 39(4), 541–563. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x

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

Mutz, D. C., & Reeves, B. (2005). The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust. American Political Science Review, 99(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055405051452

Norris, P. (2005). Radical right: Voters and parties in the electoral market. Cambridge University Press.

Prochazka, F., Weber, P., & Schweiger, W. (2018). Effects of civility and reasoning in user comments on perceived journalistic quality. Journalism Studies, 19(1), 62–78.

Rooduijn, M. (2015). The rise of the populist radical right in Western Europe. European View, 14(1), 3–11. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12290-015-0347-5

Rossini, P. (2022). Beyond incivility: Understanding patterns of uncivil and intolerant discourse in online political talk. Communication Research, 49(3), 399–425.

Rydgren, J. (2007). The Sociology of the Radical Right. Annual Review of Sociology, 33(1), 241–262. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131752

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. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.2008.00784.x

Schmuck, D., & Matthes, J. (2017). Effects of Economic and Symbolic Threat Appeals in Right-Wing Populist Advertising on Anti-Immigrant Attitudes: The Impact of Textual and Visual Appeals. Political Communication, 34(4), 607–626. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1316807

Schneeweis, A. (2018). The imagined backward and downtrodden other: Contemporary American news coverage of the Roma/gypsy. Journalism Studies, 19(15), 2187–2206.

Sengul, K. (2019). Populism, democracy, political style and post-truth: Issues for communication research. Communication Research and Practice, 5(1), 88–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2019.1561399

Skenderovic, D. (2007). Immigration and the radical right in Switzerland: Ideology, discourse and opportunities. Patterns of Prejudice, 41(2), 155–176. https://doi.org/10.1080/00313220701265528

Skytte, R. (2021). Dimensions of Elite Partisan Polarization: Disentangling the Effects of Incivility and Issue Polarization. British Journal of Political Science, 51(4), 1457–1475. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007123419000760

Sydnor, E. (2019). Disrespectful democracy: The psychology of political incivility. Columbia University Press.

Sydnor, E. (2020). Platforms for incivility: Examining perceptions across different media formats. In Studying Politics Across Media (pp. 97–116). Routledge.

Van Aelst, P., Strömbäck, J., Aalberg, T., Esser, F., de Vreese, C., Matthes, J., Hopmann, D., Salgado, S., Hubé, N., Stępińska, A., Papathanassopoulos, S., Berganza, R., Legnante, G., Reinemann, C., Sheafer, T., & Stanyer, J. (2017). Political communication in a high-choice media environment: A challenge for democracy? Annals of the International Communication Association, 41(1), 3–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2017.1288551

Van't Riet, J., & Van Stekelenburg, A. (2022). The effects of political incivility on political trust and political participation: A meta-analysis of experimental research. Human Communication Research, 48(2), 203–229.

Verbalyte, M., Bonansinga, D., & Exadaktylos, T. (2022). When emotions run high: Affective responses to crises in Europe. Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 35(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/13511610.2022.2040832

Vermeersch, P. (2003). Ethnic minority identity and movement politics: The case of the Roma in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Ethnic and Racial Studies, 26(5), 879–901. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141987032000109078

Vermeersch, P. (2012). Reframing the Roma: EU Initiatives and the Politics of Reinterpretation. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 38(8), 1195–1212. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2012.689175

Waisbord, S. (2018). The elective affinity between post-truth communication and populist politics. Communication Research and Practice, 4(1), 17–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2018.1428928

Ylä-Anttila, T. (2018). Populist knowledge: 'Post-truth' repertoires of contesting epistemic authorities. European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology, 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2017.1414620

Yuval-Davis, N., Varjú, V., Tervonen, M., Hakim, J., & Fathi, M. (2018). Press discourses on Roma in the UK, Finland and Hungary. In Racialized Bordering Discourses on European Roma (pp. 105–124). Routledge.

Ziller, C., & Schübel, T. (2015). "The Pure People" versus "the Corrupt Elite"? Political Corruption, Political Trust and the Success of Radical Right Parties in Europe. Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties, 25(3), 368–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/17457289.2014.1002792