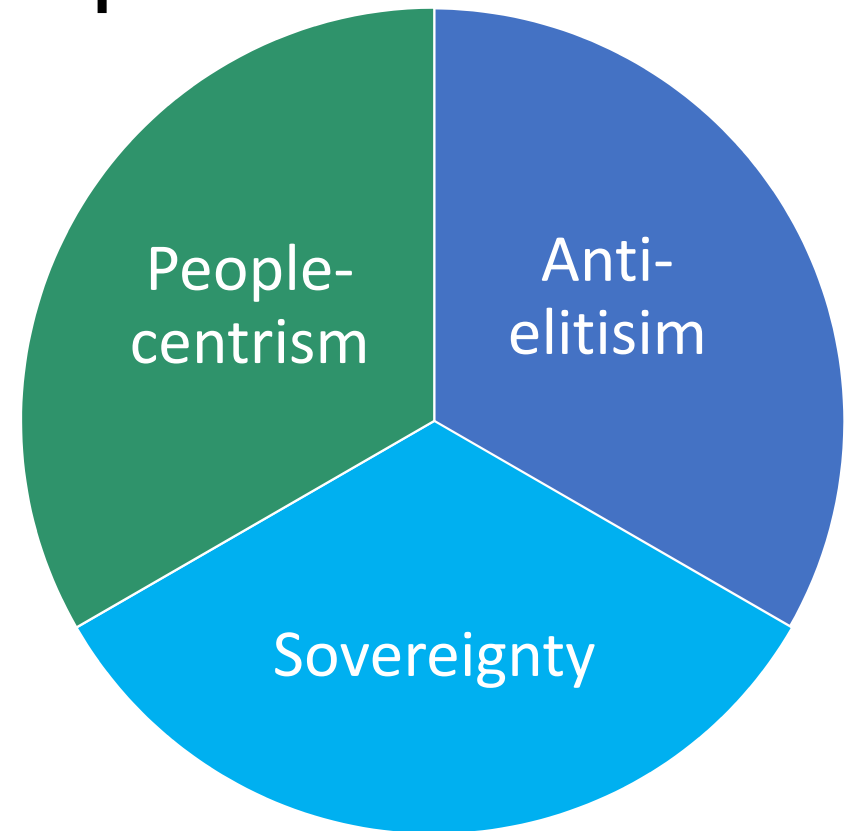# Ideational approach to populism

Three core components of populism

Populist communication style

– E.g. Engesser, De Vreese...

– Negativity

– Emotionality

– Sociability

– Register

Content analysis

Content/ textual analysis:

— ideas of political actors are measured through messages that they produce (speeches, party manifestos, social media communication etc.)

— Communication sources (various texts, pictures, etc.) as „true" representatives of what politicians say are plan to do

MUNI
FSS

Content analysis

Types of content analysis:

— Quantitative: Mancoded/handmade, Computerised/automatized

Note: Classical content analysis can be combined with computerised content analysis (semi-automated content analysis).

- Usually follow the deductive, concept/theory rooted approach

- Qualitative: seeking for a deeper understanding/interpretation

- Recently turn of the focus on visual materials (pictures, videos/Instagram, TikTok…)

Bonus task

– Try to develop a single codebook to analyze the set of pictures of

 Andrej Babis (will be available in Learning Materials today)

– 5 bonus points

Effects of populist communication

Populist political communication

Outline

1. Communication effects

2. Populist communication and its effects – assumptions

3. Empirical research

Political effects of communication

- Why communication matters in politics and why more than ever before?

- Media consumption (traditional, new media)

- Electoral campaigning – permanent campaigns

- Individualization of society – weakening of party identification (more „goods" available on the electoral market)

- Framing – what is framing?

- Priming

- Cueing

Populist communication and its effects

- Unprecedented rise of populist political actors (and widespread populist communication)

- Populist communication gets wide media coverage -> people exposed to pop. communication (perhaps even more than to non-pop)

- Media may produce populist content - > political/discoursive opportunity structures

- Is there something specific about populism?

Populist content and effects of communication

- Based on moral distinction between the good people and bad elites
- Attribution of responsibility/attribution of blame
- Negative framing – negative evaluation of those who are blamed
- The negative frames about the elites and the other – accessible to the people
- Social identity theory – in groups and outgroups: positive evaluation of own group and negative of the other
- Emotional communication – the feel of threat

Areas affected by populist communication

Populist communication

- Attitudes
- Values
- Emotions
- Behavior/voting
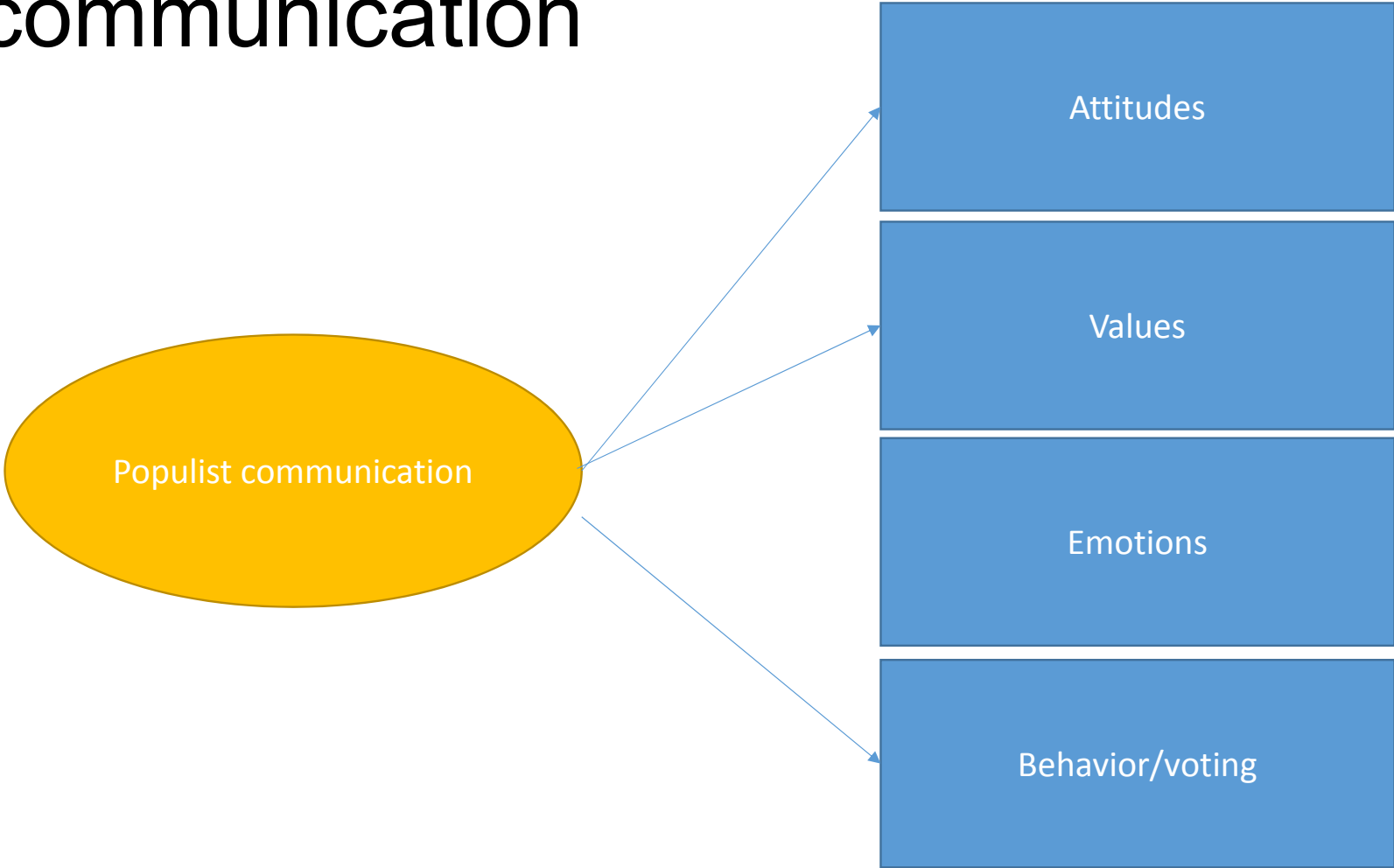
Effects of populist communication on voting

Hameleers et al. (2018): Framing blame: toward a better understanding of the effects of populist communication on populist party preferences

- RQ: Does populist political communication affect voting for populist parties?

- Not as tautological question as it may seem at first sight

Effects of populist communication on voting

- The content of populism – the deep divide between the elites and the people
- Attribution of blame/attribution of responsibility as a key concept: „the people as the innocent in-group victimized by the culprit other"
- Political opinions linked to attribution of responsibility -> populist blame exposure shold lead to support for populist parties and rejection of governmental parties
- Not equal effects among all expected – political cynicism as a catalyst
- Effects of host-ideology related attitudes – national and exclusive identity should lead to higher support for PRR
- Blame perception as the mediator – who is responsible?

Effects of populist communication on voting

- Method: framing experiment

- The logic

- Three frames: populist, EU vs national government vs no-blame (news article about Dutch labor market situation)

- Hypotheses verified: populist political communication leads to increase of support for populist party and decrease of support for largest governmental party (+ the role of national and exclusive identity)

Effects of populist communication on attitudes

Hameleers et al. (2019): "They Did It": The Effects of Emotionalized Blame Attribution in Populist Communication

- Similar logic as in the previous study but enriched by the stress on emotions in popcom and attitudes as DV

- Blame attribution leads to populist attitudes

- National/European identity mitigate blame perception – national identity lower BA to national government (European to the EU)

- Fear increases the acceptance of blame attribution

Table 1. 3 × 2 Between-Subjects Factorial Design With Control Group.

Emotional style blame attribution	Anger	Fear
The EU	Group 1: The EU is attributed blame; anger is highlighted	Group 2: The EU is attributed blame; fear is highlighted
The Dutch government	Group 3: The Dutch government is attributed blame; anger is highlighted	Group 4: The Dutch government is attributed blame; fear is highlighted
No-blame attribution	Group 5: No blame is attributed; anger is highlighted	Group 6: No blame is attributed; fear is highlighted
Control group	No-blame attribution and no emotionalized style	

Effects of populist communication on attitudes

- Effects of populist communication confirmed but the logic different compared the national and European level of politics

- The national level needed emotional communication

- Populist attitudes bolstered by populist communication (mostly the perception of representation)

- Also national and European identity weakens the effects of populist blames + different role of emotions

Effects of populist communication on attitudes

Wirz et al. (2018): The Effects of Right-Wing Populist Communication on Emotions and Cognitions toward Immigrants

- RW pop com = populist content and style + anti-immigration attitudes
- Combining RW popcom in the media and party system features
- People more affected when a relevant PRR party present
- RW popcom leads to negative perception of migrants
- Which parts of attitudes (emotional or cognitive) affected by RW popcom and how?
- Combination of media content analysis and panel survey (GER, UK, FRA, SUI)
- Populist content lead to emotional changes

Effects of populist communication on behavior

- Blassnig et al. (2019): Hitting a Nerve: Populist News Articles Lead to More Frequent and More Populist Reader Comments
- how populist online news influences the number and content of reader comments
- Some types of information (controversial, negative, emotionalized) leads to higher number of comments in online media
- Populism shares some of comments-provoking characteristics ->

Populist news content produced by political actors or media should lead to higher number of comments.

- Content effects – populist priming (and framing) creates/activates populist cognitive schemata

Populist news content produced by political actors or media should lead to populist content of comment on FB.

Effects of populist communication on behavior

- Online news across Western European countries (FR, SUI, UK)
- Coding of populist statements based on the literature in both media and comments
- Regression analyses showing clear association between populist content and both number and content of comments
- Implications:
- Populist communication in the media leads to spreading of populist ideas (possibly accelerating the rise of populist politics)

Conclusion

- Populist communication affects various aspect of people`s life – attitudes, behavior, emotions

- Theoretical explanations similar to other communication schemata – framing, priming, cueing

- Communication matters – opportunities structures, change of voting behavior, interaction between people

- Given the populist content and its illiberal nature – potentially important consequences for the quality of democracy as well