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# Data and measurement

Populist political communication

# Based on the ideational approach to populism + a specific communication style

*Populism is "a **thin-centered ideology** that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps, **"the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite",** and which argues that politics should be an expression of the **volonté générale** (general will) of the people."*

(Mudde 2004: 543).

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# Ideational approach to populism

Three core components of populism

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# Populist communication style

- E.g. Engesser, De Vreese…

- Negativity

- Emotionality

- Sociability

- Register

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# 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

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# Content analysis

Types of content analysis:

– 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

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# Content analysis

**Classical** content analysis:

- a **codebook** is defined
- coders systematically analyse text by means of a codebook (human-coded approach)

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# Content analysis

**Computerised** content analysis:

– **dictionary** of populist terms defined (indicators of populism)
– computer counts the proportion of words that we consider to be indicators of populism
– Mostly doable in English (some tools in other languages, possibility to use Google Translate)

– **Fully automatized, AI assisted (machine learning)** – not in this class

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# Content analysis: units of analysis

# Content analysis: units of analysis

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# Content analysis

**units of analysis ≠ units of measurement**

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# Content analysis: units of measurement

**Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript**

Americans want great schools for their children, safe neighbourhoods for their families and good jobs for themselves. — **1**

These are just and reasonable demands — **2**

Mothers and children trapped in poverty in our inner cities, rusted out factories scattered like tombstones across the landscape of our nation. — **3**

An education system flushed with cash, but which leaves our young and beautiful students deprived of all knowledge. And the crime and the gangs and the drugs which deprive people of so much unrealised potential. — **4**

We are one nation, and their pain is our pain, their dreams are our dreams, we share one nation, one home and one glorious destiny.

Today I take an oath of allegiance to all Americans. For many decades, we've enriched foreign industry at the expense of American industry, subsidised the armies of other countries, while allowing the sad depletion of our own military.

We've defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend our own.

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# Content analysis in practise

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

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011

– authors use both **classical and computerised content analysis** to measure and compare the degree of **populism of political parties** in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Italy

– units of analysis: **election manifestos**
– core components of populism: people-centrism, anti-elitism

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011

**<u>Classical</u>** content analysis

– units of measurement: **paragraph**

- → comparison of the degree of populism among parties based on % of populist paragraphs in their manifestos
- paragraphs in which both people-centrism and anti-elitism were present selected as populist

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011

Classical content analysis: operationalisation of the core components of populism

– **people-centrism**: "Do the authors of the manifesto refer to the people?"

  – examination of every possible **reference to the people** (citizens, our country, society, we the people, etc.)

    list of words and combinations of words that could refer to the people:  people, citizen(s), community, society, public, population, nation(al), all of us, each of us, everyone, our, we, voter(s), electorate, referenda, direct democracy, public opinion, country, specific country (depending of course on the country under analysis

  – interpretation of the broader **context**

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011

Classical content analysis: operationalisation of the core components of populism

– **anti-elitism**: "Do the authors of the manifesto criticise elites?"
  – focus on criticism concerning the **elite in general** (critique on a specific party/ politician not coded)
  – interpretation of the broader context

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011

**Computerised** content analysis

– units of measurement: **words**

   – → comparison of the degree of populism among parties based on % of populist words (words considered populism)

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011

Computerised content analysis: operationalisation of the core components of populism

- focus only on words that refer to **anti-elitism**
  - measurement of people-centrism by means of individual words is nearly impossible (words we and our often mentioned not in reference to the people, but to the political party)
- selection of words into **dictionary** based on both empirical and theoretical reasoning
  - election manifestos of populist parties not analysed in this study used to make list of words that such parties have used to express their negativity towards elites

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# Content analysis in practise

Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011
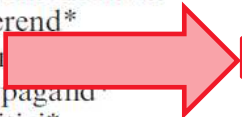
DICTIONARY OF THE COMPUTER-BASED CONTENT ANALYSIS

|  | NL | UK | GE | IT |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Core** | elit* | elit* | elit* | elit* |
|  | consensus* | consensus* | konsens* | consens* |
|  | ondemocratisch* | undemocratic* | undemokratisch* | antidemocratic* |
|  | ondemokratisch* |  |  |  |
|  | referend* | referend* | referend* | referend* |
|  | corrupt* | corrupt* | korrupt* | corrot* |
|  | propagand* | propagand* | propagand* | propagand* |
|  | politici* | politici* | politiker* | politici* |
|  | *bedrog* | *deceit* | täusch* | ingann* |
|  | *bedrieg* | *deceiv* | betrüg* |  |
|  |  |  | betrug* |  |
|  | *verraa* | *betray* | *verrat* | tradi* |
|  | *verrad* |  |  |  |
|  | schaam* | shame* | scham* | vergogn* |
|  |  |  | schäm* |  |
|  | schand* | scandal* | skandal* | scandal* |
|  | waarheid* | truth* | wahrheit* | verità |
|  | oneerlijk* | dishonest* | unfair* | disonest* |
|  |  |  | unehrlich* |  |

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# Content analysis in practise

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| | corr | corrupt* | korrupt* | corrot* |
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| | | | unehrlich* | |

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# Content analysis in practise

Gründl 2020

- – Dictionary based approach

- – Automated content analysis

- – Words in context

- – Broader dictionary

- – Parameters of a dictionary: recall (avoid false negatives) and precision (avoid false positives)

- – Different units of measurement (sentences and posts on FB and Twitter)

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# Content analysis

Harvard Dataverse – Global Populism Database: https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.7910/DVN/LFTQEZ

– measurement of the level of populist discourse in the speeches of 215 chief executives (presidents and prime ministers) from 66 countries across all continents, mostly between 2000 and 2018
– holistic grading

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# Advantages & Drawbacks of different types of content analysis

| Property | Classical content analysis | Computerised content analysis |
|---|---|---|
| **Reliability** | ▪ risk of low inter-coder reliability (the extent to which different coders code the same text in the same way)<br>▪ can be improved by several training sessions (explanation of codebook, coding examples discussed, take-home exercises) | ▪ a computer produces the exact same results no matter how many times one runs the analysis (when using the same dictionary) |
| **Validity\*** | ▪ higher | ▪ lower (analysis of single words) |
| **Costs** | ▪ higher (human-coded approach is slower and more expensive)<br>▪ training of coders needs to be taken into account | ▪ lower |

\*Extent to which operationalisations of a construct measure a construct as defined by a theory

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# Visual materials as a political content

- Basic assumption on the importance of visual materials – affecting our attitudes, values and *also* perception of politics

- What are visual materials: pictures, movies, sculptures (anything you can see)

- Different ways of analysis (similar to text analysis) – both qualitative and quantitative

# Quantitative approach

- Similar to other quantitative analysis – theoretical assumptions, ideally formulation of theoretically driven hypotheses (BUT explorative approach possible as well)
- Definition of variables of interest (objects /leader, other members of the leadership, other parties/, environment /e.g. mingling with the people/, clothing, policy areas, types of pictures /e.g. Selfies/)
- Usually *comparative* hypotheses (are populist visual materials more *people-centric* than materials of other political parties?) – otherwise how would you know that something is more or less?
- Possible questions:
- In which circustances are leaders of populist parties presented?
- How are other political parties presented in visual materials of different political actors?
- *Challenge (not much has been done so far): How to measure populism in visual communication?*

# Types of questions (Bell)

1. Questions of priority/salience of media content: how visible (how frequently, how large, in what order in a programme) different kinds of images, stories, events are represented? 'Agenda Setting' studies of news broadcasts would be an example of this kind of question.

2. Questions of 'bias': comparative questions about the duration, frequency, priority or salience of representations of, say, political personalities, issues, policies, or of 'positive' versus 'negative' features of representation.

3. Historical changes in modes of representation of, for example, gender, occupational, class, or ethically codified images in particular types of publications or television genres.

- Try to think of these types of questions in relation to populist communication

# Data in quantitative analysis

- Similar principles as in textual analysis
- Definition of the corpus (data) – which pictures/movies should I analyze?
- Driven by research questions
- Possibilities – election period, representative sample, related to a specific topic, different time periods, etc.
- units of analysis – pictures, frames, parts of pictures such as politicians, environement, tonality… (dependent on the question)
- Values – the same as the text analysis (remember: mutually exclusive and ideally exhaustive categories – see Krippendorf)
- Interpretation – prevalent characteristic, comparison…
- Reliability – not that so much of *our* concern in the course but values/categories should be defined as clearly as possible

# Qualitative approach

- Deeper understanding of the content

- Visual materials are not translated into numbers or quantifiable categories

- Interpretation, effort to find a context for interpretation

- Meaning instead of numbers

# Example I: Doerr

- Qualitative approach
- „visual posters and symbols constructed and circulated transnationally by various political actors to mobilize contentious politics on the issues of immigration and citizenship"
- Transnational spillover
- Comparison of ideologically different political actors
- „how did the SVP and EuroMayday campaigns portray the relationship between immigrants and citizens in order to reach out and mobilize supporters in distinct national contexts and transnationally?"

# Data, method and results

- SVP, NPD and LN
- analysis of the black sheep campaign, the sample includes relevant visuals found on web pages and blogs by the groups associated with the cases studied (98 visuals, *blacksheep related*)
- Discoursive analysis, visual iconography, contextualization (*you do need to follow the method in details, instead concentrate on the qualitative nature of the analysis*)
- Comparison of the ways of transnational spillover and adaptation of communication related to immigration

# Example II: Wodak, Forchtner

- Analysis of a specific visual materials – Sagas from Vienna
- Qualitative approach – discourse-historical approach
- „calculated ambivalence" – blurring the line between fiction and reality
- Politics of memory
- Contextual analysis of discoursive practices
- What is important here is the conceptual and analytical background suited to the research questions – remember: research design *follows* your questions

# Conclusion

- You can meaure level of populism by collecting new data or by using existing data sources

- An economic way how to assess policy positions of parties or compare them accross countries or time

- In same cases not necessary to know the language, althouhg the numbers needs to be explained

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