Populism and the media

Populist political communication
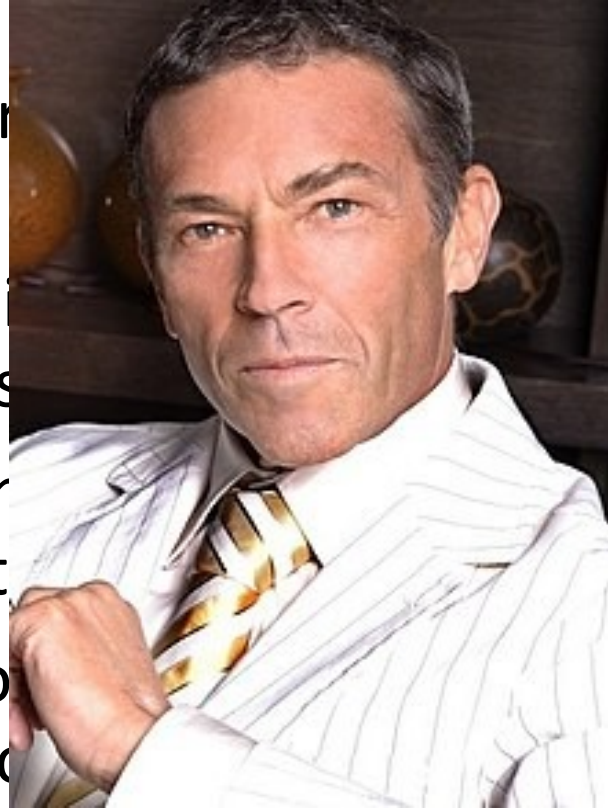
What is the relationship between populism and the media?

Outline

1. Populism in the media

2. Populism against the media

3. Media populism

Populism in the media

- Usually flamboyant per   media attention – „media complicity“

- Reporting about anythi   routine“ in the very core of the media (populists as

- Tabloid vs traditional m   edia defending the status quo vs focus on eccent   of the social reality

- Populist communicatio   guage and appearance („‘journalists liked to c   various dress styles and labelled him a male model’“)

Flamboyant populism

Populism in the media

Four structural positions of the media that affect the presence of populism (Kramer 2014):

1. They can **speak directly to the people**, therefore circumventing the political system (traditional communication channels)

- Media as „powerful movement that only consists of public sentiment, shared moral concerns, and collective mobilization"

2. **Symbolic power via the representation of society** – depiction of the reality based on the life of the common people, the real life X elites alienated from the everyday word

3. **Media as the fourth estate** outside the structures of political power – BUT impartiality and neutrality. Depends on the level of the bias of the coverage.

4. **Specific style and rhetoric** – media may use the style and language different from the one used by political elites: being more martial, radical, polemical

Populism against the media

- Anti-elitist appeal as a defining feature of populist political communication
- Chameleonic nature of populism – receptive towards other ideologies
- Media often presented as part of the elitist conspiracy against the elites
- Specific framing depends on the content of populism („liberal media", „welcoming media", „"The monopolistic media hide the true values for the people" /Csurka/,…)
- Media stealing the sovereignty of the people
- = **anti-media populism**

Not just anti-media populism

- Havlík, Kluknavská (in progress): *Beyond anti-media populism: Legitimate and untruthful media in the communication of PRR on Facebook*

- Friend and foe relationship with the media: legitimate and untruthful media

- Information and communication functions X reference to untruthfulness

- Analysis of communication of Czech populist radical right on Facebook – claims analysis about the media (various outlets, context of the crises)

- Conclusion: more than **half of claims** about the legitimate role, cca 1/3 post-truth accusations

- Post-truth accusations linked to media in general and PSM, far less disinformation media

- SPD more truth accusations than Dawn, immigration issue linke to information and communication function

- Not just anti-media communication – more complex relationship

Media populism

- „'populist media' or 'media populism' – highly commercialized media production and/or news coverage that yield to general popular tastes (Mazzoleni 2008)
- The process of mediatization (also „video democracy" – Sartori)
- The transformation of political language into spectacle
- Mastering of TV broadcasting – „telepopulism" (Blocher and ARENA - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njTtf1nRX1w&ab_channel=BlocherTV)
- Greater focus on personalization – emotions, dramatization (more suitable for populists or populist communication) + populist parties usually more strongly identified with the leader (x policies)
- Strengthened by the competition between private and public media since the 1990s (in Europe)

+ populist media ownership

- Is media ownership more likely for populist politicians?

- Not necessarily a strong theoretical linkage between populism and the media ownership
- BUT populism has little patience with checks and balances including the watchdog role of the media
- Any examples?

- Berlusconi in Italy
- Babiš in the Czech Republic

Populist voters and media consumption

Hameleers et al. (2017): The Appeal of Media Populism: The Media Preferences of Citizens with Populist Attitudes

- Theoretical assumption about attitudinal congruence between voters and the media content (echo chambers, confirmation bias)
- citizens with populist attitudes are expected to self-select media content that articulates a societal divide between "us" and "them"
- Three types of populism in the media: people centrality, anti-elitism, monocultural populism
- Expectations: tabloid media, entertainment media diet
- Exclusionism related to tabloid consumption (preferences for media stronger with preferences for populist content)

Conclusion

- Different layers of the relationship between the media and populism
- Populism in the media – populist content or opportunities for the populist content shared by the media
- Media populism – populism and populist political communication in the age of mediatization
- Populism against the media – media as part of the anti-media populist discourse
- Media ownership
- Media consumption