Political Discourse - Multidisciplinary Approaches #2: New Discourses of Populism and Nationalism

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
Keynote Speakers
Nationalism 4.0: how narratives of progress strengthen an inadvertent nationalism

Felicitas Macgilchrist

Much media reporting on populism today erects barriers between ‘us’ (the rational sensible readers/viewers) and ‘them’ (the irrational alt-right). Right-wing populism is often related to the rise of social media, data-driven targeting, online filter bubbles and other internet phenomena. In this talk, inspired by Selina Thompson’s Race Cards exhibition which asks ‘Who is more problematic – famous racist Nigel Farage, or the liberal journalists politely asking him questions?’, I aim to refocus attention on the ‘inadvertent nationalism’ of everyday liberal-democratic capitalism. Drawing on ethnographic discourse analytical work, I tell ‘thick data’ stories to illustrate how young people pick up strongly nationalist perspectives even though the adults around them have no intention of promoting nationalism. If progress narratives are infused throughout our media landscape, then interventions aimed at defusing the potential nationalism and populism of ‘digital youth’ will remain fruitless.
Archetypal populism: from mainstream media to the “intellectual dark web”

Darren Kelsey

How is populism affective and why does it resonate through multiple ideological contexts in political discourse? This paper will explore those questions with attention to a series of case studies accounting for the archetypal qualities of populist discourse from mainstream media to the “Intellectual Dark Web” (IDW). I will argue that populism resonates with mass audiences because its stories function through affective archetypal forms – particularly in the monomyth (Hero’s Journey) – that are fundamental to the human psyche. I will briefly revisit my previous work (Kelsey, 2017) on Nigel Farage and Brexit, followed by Russell Brand’s Revolution and Messiah Complex. Here we see how archetypal populism transcends the left-right political “spectrum”. For this reason, I will then introduce the recent phenomenon of the IDW. The IDW was a metaphor used by mathematician, Eric Weinstein to describe a group of public intellectuals who are using the internet to share ideas and host conversations “beyond the gated institutional narrative” of mainstream media. With millions of viewers and a growing following online/offline, the IDW’s own story is one of archetypal populism. The resonance IDW has had with mass audiences can be understood through the psycho-discursive framework I have developed in previous work (Kelsey, 2017) on affective mythologies and murmurations. The IDW has advantages and disadvantages as a conceptual movement that functions beyond “the media establishment”. Attention to IDW discourse will enable us to consider the implications of this phenomenon on critical research and the function of those archetypal, populist qualities that have given it significant traction beyond mainstream media.
Populism and nationalism: paradoxes of mutual attraction and repulsion

Yannis Stavvakakis

Today populism seems to be firmly back on the agenda. A series of recent events have shocked and scandalised our global public spheres, causing concern for the future of democracy and puzzling academics, journalists and citizens alike. The close empirical connections between populism and nationalism have established a rather misleading overlap between the concepts of populism and nationalism in academic and public debates, often reinforcing a euro-centric equation between populism and the extreme right. Starting from a discursive perspective, this lecture will articulate a differential identification of populism and nationalism as distinct ways of discursively constructing “the people” and shaping political antagonism(s). As a result, new ways to account for the paradoxes of mutual attraction and repulsion between the two are bound to emerge.
Conference Papers
Contemporary post-truth discourses put the epistemological foundations of Discourse Studies to a test. According to some critical observers, discourse analysts have been playing into the hands of Trump, Brexit and right-wing populists by politicizing scientific knowledge and undermining the idea of objective scientific truth. Yet how can one account for the analytical and normative challenges that these new discourses present? Against the background of a Strong Programme in Discourse Studies, I will look into how to account for truth claims concerning populist discourse in Discourse Studies. For the Strong Programme, truth is not before or outside discourse. Yet in no way does it support the idea that all discourses are equally true. Rather, the question is how to account for hierarchies between more and less valued knowledges. Taking inspiration from debates in Science and Technology Studies, Strong Programme discourse research subscribes to the idea that accounts of discourses need to be symmetrical, heterogeneous, multi-perspectival and reflexive. I will relate Strong Programme discourse research to the founding traditions of French and Critical Discourse Studies. The Strong Programme pleads for a practice turn in Discourse Studies as it invites to investigate the practices and processes of using language through which participants of political and scientific discourse not only represent realities, but, through their representation, also make them true, legitimate and valuable.
Post-truth, fake news and authenticity I

Vague language in post-truth politics

N. Knoblock

The troubling prevalence of lies and lying in the contemporary social sphere has prompted the classification of our time as the “post-truth” era (Keyes, 2004). The problem has become the focus of research (e.g., Bratich, 2004; Harsin, 2015; Higgins, 2016; Prado, 2017) as post-truth societies seem to become indifferent to dishonesty, appeals to emotion rather than fact are dominant, and facts are ignored if they contradict audience’s beliefs and preferences (Suiter, 2016). These tendencies are troubling not only because some people choose to lie, but also because of the large number of consumers of falsehoods. Unfortunately, the “receiving end” of post-truth communication has not received the attention it deserves. Researchers have described ways in which misinformation is spread and amplified (Desigaud et al, 2017; Howard et al., 2017) and addressed Donald Trump’s unique communicative style and Twitter usage (Goldfarb, 2017; Kreis, 2017; Savoi, 2017; Wang & Liu, 2017). However, few studies analyze how listeners/readers of problematic statements react to them. The proposed presentation looks specifically into the reactions of Trump’s audience to his Muslim ban announcement.

The presentation analyzes the uses of “he said”, “he did not say”, and their versions in the corpus collected from Trump’s official Facebook page where users commented on his proposed Muslim ban in November 2015. We identified 182 cases when Trump supporters used the lemma SAY to provide an interpretation of what Trump meant by his proposal. The preliminary results point to a broad diversity of interpretations conveniently allowed by Trump’s proclamation. Vagueness of his statements permitted his followers to fill the blanks with whatever meanings were pleasing to them. The analysis shows the lengths Trump’s supporters would go to put their own meanings into his announcement and demonstrates that the “post-truth” reality depends not only on disinformation but on vagueness as well.

References:


National(ist) narratives

The Impossible Totality of Ukraine’s “People”: On the Populist Discourse of the Ukrainian Maidan

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Employing Ernesto Laclau’s theory of populism, according to which the collective identities of “people” emerge out of articulatory practices, this paper analyzes the populist discourse of the Ukrainian Maidan. If defined in Laclau’s terms, the Maidan signified a breach in continuity of the communitarian space that manifested itself in the construction of an internal antagonistic frontier separating those in power from democratic demands of various sorts: The protesters wanted to stop abuses of power, corruption, and nepotism, to restrain oligarchic influence, to refuse economic cooperation with Russia in favor of European integration, and so on. Articulating these demands equivalently, the movement for European integration presented themselves as an impossible totality of the Ukrainian nation. After the victory of the revolution, when the Maidan’s most prominent activists became the ministers and Parliamentary deputies, those holding anti-Maidan views found itself marginalized, demonized, and presented as “non-Ukrainian,” as “the Ukrainian condition” was imagined exclusively in populist pro-Maidan terms. Despite the fact that the vast majority of people holding anti-Maidan views were against the “coup d’etat” – their privileged term to denote the Maidan – but not in favor of joining Russia, Kyiv officials labeled the whole of the anti-Maidan movement “separatist” and anti-Maidan combatants “terrorists,” in contrast to Maidan armed revolutionaries who were considered heroes. Instead of negotiations, on which the people of Donbass counted, an “anti-terrorist” military operation (ATO) was launched. The paper discursively analyzes the traces of the formation of the Maidan’s populist discourse through the analysis of postings on Ukrayinska Pravda (UP) – a political website serving as a mobilization site for Maidan activists. 430 opinion pieces – posted from November 21, 2013, to February 18, 2014 – were analyzed.

References:

**National(ist) narratives**

*Nationalist dreams: The update of national narratives in public discourse and the rise of the »Neue Rechte« (New Right) in Germany.*

**A. Baunack**

KEYWORDS: National narrative, public discourse, New Right, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)

In today’s Germany, an »authoritarian revolt«¹ (Weiss 2017), profits from the discourse about (political-economic) strength and order that arose during the financial crisis of 2008 with the resulting global economic crisis. In the context of current nationalist tendencies in Europe narratives about the German nation changed in public discourse. During the onset of the refugee crisis in 2015 the German government tried to preserve a moralistic approach to a humanitarian catastrophe – summarised in Angela Merkel’s statement »Wir schaffen das« (We will get it done) – and failed in its attempt, facing a dominant national reflex in the German society. A Renaissance of the »Neue Rechte« as »the hinge in between right-wing-extremism and an anti-liberal, anti-modern neo-conservativism« (Gessenharter 1989)² became noticeable. After all, right-wing Populism established itself in politics after the general election in 2017 in form of the political party »Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)« (Alternative for Germany) – which is ideologically tied to the historic »Neue Rechte« (New Right).

My paper aims to discuss these developments. By doing so, I hope to contribute to the analysis of the rise of nationalistic and regressive tendencies in Europe. My argumentation is based on the empirical research for my dissertation, in which I analyze the change of national narratives in Germany and Ireland during the latest European financial crisis.

National(ist) narratives

Contemporary Sinhalese Nationalism: Studying Memory, Triumphantism and Hierarchy in the President’s Rhetoric

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This paper presents an empirical account of Sinhalese nationalism between 2005 and 2015, the decade of Mahinda Rajapaksa’s presidency that saw the end of nearly thirty years of civil war in 2009. Sinhalese nationalism, the ideological movement of the island’s majority community, has dominated post-independence Sri Lanka, albeit long contested by separatist Tamil nationalism. The military defeat of the LTTE provided a moment of uncertainty, and speculations about the future of Sinhalese nationalism were ripe. This paper engages with the opportunities and challenges posed by the defeat of the nation’s traditional ‘other’. It highlights how the Rajapaksa regime used the momentum to reinvigorate and adapt traditional symbolic resources as well as to construct new ones out of the post-war triumphalism to consolidate its power through the ‘Sinhalisation’ of the country’s political, territorial and national spaces.

Utilising critical discourse analysis (after Wodak et al. 2009), this paper examines core dimensions of Sinhalese nationalism before and after 2009, demonstrating how we can study nationalist ideology and potential shifts within it through political rhetoric. We look in particular at traditional symbolic resources, especially Sinhalese historical narratives of the past and present, which construct a Sinhalese-dominated national identity posing a serious obstacle to the promised inclusive ‘new patriotism’; the realignment of the ‘other’ from the LTTE to a more elusive international threat which bolstered the increasing alienation of Sri Lanka from the West; and the construction of local hierarchical and democratic sources of legitimacy for Sinhalese rule in the state as well as Rajapaksa’s ‘populist authoritarian and dynastic’ politics (Welikala 2015).

As the rise of a ‘New Nationalism’ in the West garners much attention, this paper engages with nationalism in Sri Lanka, which, despite remarkable similarities to this ‘new’ phenomenon, has often been discounted as ‘ethnic’ or ‘hot’ nationalism like many other cases in the non-Western world.

References:


Brexit I

The power of myth in populist political discourse

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After the British people voted for Brexit in June 2016, the role the media played was intensely debated. Biased and false reporting has plagued the British media coverage of EU affairs since decades. My paper investigates why misrepresentations of the truth prevail even after they have been debunked. Using Critical Discourse Analysis I show that the efficacy of false news reports can be linked to the narration of national myth.

Jack Lule has demonstrated that news reports are based on archetypal mythologies to tell their stories (Lule, 2001). With Roland Barthes I understand myth as “depoliticised speech” (Barthes, 1972, 255) which conversely fulfils a political function precisely because it pretends to be ahistorical and natural (Barthes, 1972, 256). Political psychology has shown that misperceptions of the truth survive because we negotiate our need for truth against our directional preferences (Flynn, Nyhan, and Reifler, 2017). Such believes and persuasions can be narrated as identity myth.

As a case study I analyse British fake news reports from the early 1990s which the Representation of the European Commission in the UK has archived at their London office. Although the EU Commission in detail and persistently rebutted notorious disinformation like the alleged ‘ban of bent cucumbers’, these falsehoods are repeated until today. Critical Discourse Analysis unveils features in the news reports that produce consistently the narrative of the funny, irreverent Briton who stands up against a bully - a popular and widespread myth of Britishness. I argue that the false news reports on European regulation proofed resistant against many attempts of debunking because they tapped into this popular identity myth.

I further argue that, more generally, the concept of myth and using CAD to detect it in news stories are productive tools to investigate the efficacy of populist speech.

References:


This paper focuses on the rhetorical use of ‘(the) people’ in the context of the Brexit referendum campaign. By examining a dataset of articles and opinion columns published in a corpus of British tabloids, it aims to unpack the discursive representations of social actors and the semantic relations constructed around ‘the people’, a key term frequently invoked in populist narratives as the ultimate democratic subject and, yet, often representing an empty and shifting signifier (Canovan, 2005). My analysis will suggest that populist ideologies circulating in the public sphere and echoed in the media provided the dominant discursive frame that legitimised the referendum ‘in/out’ binary as the ‘choice of/for the people’. The analysis will highlight the role of the media in the discursive mobilization and antagonisation of collective identities - such as the British people, the (European) ‘migrants’, the ‘left behind’ and the ‘elite’ - and how tabloid representations of the re-empowered ‘British people’ acted as powerful catalysts for the imagination of a neoliberal and intergovernmental world order post-Brexit. I will finally draw attention to the semantic openness of the term ‘the people’ (in English even more than other languages) and how this vagueness has conveniently driven the post-referendum public debate on the ‘will of the people’.

References:
Our study context is that of hate speech circulating on electronic media, conducive to the summoning and verbalisation of emotions (Piolino 2005, Plantin 2011). It questions the reception by subjects (18 to 25 years old) of the video clip of the French government stop djihadism³ aimed at creating a reaction to the regimentation of young citizens. As part of a project funded by the CNRS interdisciplinary mission (AMR 2016) we interviewed 28 subjects and collected their emotional reactions after viewing this clip. Following a linguistic and discursive analysis of the video clip as a source discourse and direct support of interaction, we seek to understand the link between the intention of the post-attacks speech of the government and its actual perlocutory effects in the youth. We will develop our results by the Lexico3 statistical analysis software. Thus, we will seek to understand how a government discourse “against” (djihadism), seeking to federate “against” it as well, can create a dissensus, a conflict, which against all odds created a reaction likely to participate in the breeding ground of populism, in terms of rejecting the elites and denouncing their discourse as thoughtful (Mayaffre 2013, Tagguieff 2007). More specifically, we will answer the following questions: is the youth reaction the one expected by the government? What are the argumentative markers and discursive elements that tilt the discourse towards controversy? Compassion or mobilization against? Anger or understanding? To what extent does a consensus of interpretation develop around the post-terrorist discourse of the government? What are the consequences? Our field of study is language sciences. Our theoretical framework is that of French discourse analysis and pragmatics (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005), speech acts (Austin 1962, Laforest et al., 2004) and argumentation (Perelman et al., 1988; Plantin 1996). Vincent et al., 1993, Amossy 2010).

References:

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ke3i9-7kkQM


Visual discourse

Symbolic Thickening of Far-Right Visual Discourse in Public Performances of Polish Populists

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A key feature of thin populist ideology is a sharp division of the social world into “good people” and “bad elites.” Populist ideology “thickens” when it is combined with another ideology, for instance when this basic distinction is formulated in terms of a nativist or religious discourse with the aim of defining “aliens” or “enemies.” Ideological thickening of populism is enhanced by and contributes to the cultural process we call symbolic thickening. Thin symbolic systems, congruent with thin populism, have relatively few symbols with rather simple connotations, are amenable to many interpretations, and are thus potentially attractive to a large group of people. They can be “thickened” by adding new symbols and suggesting tight interrelations between them. The resulting “thick” symbolic system offers a narrower definition of collective identity and thus attracts a narrower group of people. Our central argument is that a powerful cultural-political feedback loop emerged in Poland. A gradual symbolic thickening of the Polish public culture through the intensification of Catholic and nationalist discourses resulted in the expansion of the discursive opportunity structure. This produced conditions conducive to the thickening of populist ideologies and helped to enhance the legitimacy of populist movements and parties. The rising legitimacy and popularity of the increasingly vigorous “thick” populism, in turn, contributed to the further symbolic thickening of public culture.

The celebrations of the Polish National Independence Day (11 November), gradually “high-jacked” by right-wing populists who stage the March of Independence, are the case analysed in this presentation. The increasingly aggressive nationalism and intensifying saturation of the March with religious motifs are traced through a close iconographic analysis of the March’s posters from 2011 to 2017. This analysis is augmented by brief examination of several elements of the right wing political theatre.
Visual discourse

The Linguistics and Semiotics of Populist De-/Legitimisation: Language and Image in an FPÖ Election Campaign Poster (Austria, 2017)

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If de-/legitimisation is a basic strategy of political discourse (Chilton/Schäffner 2011), then any politico-linguistic research agenda should refer to populist strategies of de-/legitimisation by multimodal means, inter alia in contexts of electoral polarisation. The poster in focus dates from the end of the 2017 Austrian parliamentary election campaign, as the conservative Österreichische Volkspartei (ÖVP) under foreign minister and Chancellor hopeful, Sebastian Kurz, was increasingly adopting a far right-wing stance, thereby impinging on the discursive space of the right-wing populist Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) under its leader, Heinz-Christian Strache. In an attempt to rally the troops for the expected neck-to-neck race at the ballot box, the FPÖ responded with a poster campaign which linked Kurz to a pro-Islamic stance, suggesting that Strache was the only honest voice of the people. The poster shows Strache in the foreground and Kurz, smaller and facing away from Strache, in the background, and it features speech bubbles attributing the statements “Der Islam gehört zu Österreich" ('Islam belongs to Austria') to Kurz and “Die Islamisierung gehört gestoppt" ('Islamisation has got to be stopped') to Strache. The feigned dialogue hinges on Islam(isierung) in combination with the verb gehören, which is used here in two distinct standard and sub-standard constructions, respectively: while Kurz allegedly uses the standard gehören zu ('belong to'), aligning him with a corresponding, highly controversial statement originally made by former German Federal President, Christian Wulff, Strache's apparent response contains the colloquial gehören + past participle ('got to') regionalism, supporting his image as the only genuine spokesman of the (non-standard speaking) electorate. Analysing these two items of language linguistically and in their semiotic context will contribute to our under-standing of populist de-/legitimisation strategies, with special reference to the deployment of different linguistic varieties and registers.

References:
The contribution presents insights from our research project currently conducted at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. The central aim of our project is to combine theoretical conceptualisations of the Political with Althusser’s theory of the Ideological to create new insights. We want to scrutinize this theoretical reciprocal permeation of the Political (Rancière 2002) and the Ideological by analysing social networks in the media dispositif. Our analysis is primarily guided by the following questions: Can the media dispositif be seen as an area of the Political – and not simply of politics –, and what role does the Ideological – understood as “‘Representation’ of the Imaginary Relationship of Individuals to Their Real Conditions of Existence” (Althusser 2001, p. 109) – play within that area?

We will analyse the relationship between the Political, the Ideological and the media dispositif by integrating it into a specific (background) structure: Lacan’s (2013, 2015) three orders of the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real. This innovative theoretical combination provides a systematic framework for our theoretical work and for interpreting specific research questions. The three orders are structures in dominance: the Symbolic – understood as structured signs – dominates the Political; the Imaginary – understood as the visual – dominates the Ideological; and the Real – understood as the ‘event’ – dominates the media dispositif. The permeation of these three structures will thus be analysed by looking at the interplay of language, images and events.

Based on this theoretical framework we will analyse specific discourse fragments and strands. Our object of inquiry are the Austrian general elections in 2017. Within that we will focus on discourses on migration, integration and security. We will analyse Facebook pages of parties in parliament and of specific newspapers from 1st September to 15th October 2017, the day of the elections.

During this analysis, we will look at the following more specific research questions: if both the Political and the Ideological operate within the scope of the media dispositif, what impact does this space – understood as space of participation – have on the constitution of subjects? What role do current discussions on ‘post-truth’ play within this context? Can we isolate discursive chains of equivalence (Laclau/Mouffe 2001), characterizing emancipatory or conservative positions?

Our methodology combines different discourse-analytical approaches (Wodak 2012, 2016, Link 2006) that will be broadened to include instruments to systematically analyse the visual (Mitchell 1994) and analyses of technical aspects of the media dispositif – algorithms and social bots or chatbots (Seyfert/Roberge 2017, Pariser 2011).
Bibliography:


Post-truth, fake news and authenticity II

‘Post-truth’ and populism: legitimating truth whilst protecting free speech

R. MacKay

‘Post-truth’ and ‘fake news’, as descriptive compounds, raises the question of their modified predecessors: ‘post-truth’ implies ‘truth’, and ‘fake news’ implies ‘[real] news’. It behoves us – if we are to use such terms – to interrogate their meaning – their ‘truth’ if you will. What is ‘fake news’? Does ‘fake’ refer to the lack of empirical evidence behind the report or something to do with the intention of the news producer? Are infomercials ‘fake news’? Is news from China ‘fake’ if it is found to be censored? Propaganda? Biased reporting? You can see what is happening here: ‘real news’ is becoming more like an ideal than a norm away from which Brexit and Trump have pulled us.

The Orwellian resonances are clear: ‘to a time when truth exists’. This ‘post-truth’ anxiety is not new: the Sophists were seen by the Socratics as dangerous for their willingness to separate rhetoric and argument from considerations of truth. In fact, the ‘post-truth’ label can best be seen as a manifestation of the truth anxiety which has beset humankind for as long as another’s word was given status upon which action were decided.

Bound up with this is the challenge to the status of science as a privileged source of truth. The astrophysicist, Neil deGrasse Tyson, expresses the frustration of the scientific establishment perfectly when he says: “This is science! It’s not something to toy with! It’s not something to say ‘Oh, I choose not to believe E=mc 2’. You don’t have that option! When you have an established, scientific, emergent truth, it is true whether or not you believe in it” (Tyson, 2017). Unfortunately for the progress with political talk on climate change, Tyson is mistaken: one does ‘have the option’ not to believe whatever one wishes – ‘thoughtcrime’ policed by the scientific establishment is Orwellian indeed! The challenge, according to Latour, is to help science regain some of its lost authority whilst not falling back upon the false certainty which he sees as ‘a remnant of the ideal of science’ (de Vrieze, 2017).

In this paper I draw out the assumptions which the terms ‘fake news’ and ‘post-truth’ carry with them, making the argument that unstudied use of the terms undermines the impulse behind the challenge to them.

References:


Post-truth, fake news and authenticity II

‘Straight talking honest politics’: Post-truth politics, authenticity and the rhetoric of metamodernity

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A burgeoning wealth of journalistic writing suggests that we have entered an age of ‘post-truth’ politics, a political culture in which the rhetorical appeals from ethos and pathos trump those from logos (Browse, 2017: 168). Scholars have pointed to the effect of online media in accelerating this recalibration of what constitutes legitimate argument (Harsin, 2015). This chapter suggests that while the term ‘post-truth’ is unhelpfully normative – because it illegitimately privileges the epistemological and ontological perspective of those who use it – it does capture a shift in the kinds of legitimacy claims made by contemporary politicians. In the chapter, these shifts are instead accounted for within the theoretical framework of ‘metamodernism’, which describes the renewed emphasis on “depth” and authenticity in the cultural and political sphere (van den Akker et al, 2017). This notion of authenticity is explored in relation to the linguistic performance and representation of the British Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Using an indexical framework (Eckert, 2008; see also Browse, forthcoming), I analyse three texts from the 2017 Labour general election campaign – a viral party political broadcast, a political speech and an interview with Corbyn. The analysis investigates the interlinked ways in which the Labour leader and his party’s appeal to authenticity are styled across these three different media platforms. The chapter therefore offers a critical stylistic reading of Corbyn’s performances of authenticity which is situated with respect to the contemporary metamodern political and media context.

Keywords: Jeremy Corbyn, post-truth, metamodernism, authenticity, indexicality

References:


Right- and left-wing populism I

Europe and the populist Discourse: A Corpus driven Discourse Analysis

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It seems to be generally assumed within the field of populism studies that right-wing populist parties exhibit a nativist or at least nationalist discourse when constructing “the people”, whereas leftist populist parties tend to construct it in a more heterogeneous and inclusionary way (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2011; Stavrakakis et.al., 2017; De Cleen, 2017); it is also apparent that “the people” in leftist populist discourse is associated with notions such as social rights, or cosmopolitan human rights. In this process of construction of the populist discourse, Europe comes about by representing alternatively the Europe of the elites or the Europe of the people. However, the articulation of Europe within a populist discourse is changing, complex and multifaceted and cannot be reduced to hard/soft Eurosceptic classifications (see Taggart’s [1998] first elaboration and its successive critiques or developments: Usherwood, 2013; Taggart and Szcerbiak, 2013; Startin and Krouwel, 2013; della Porta et al. 2017).

Consistently, the goal of this paper is to look at how Europe and populist discourses come together across the diversity of populist parties. To do so, we analyse the case of Podemos in Spain and Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany that function as equivalents to the leftist and rightist poles of the populist spectrum, but that in any case exhaust the wide variety of populist parties; this said, this comparison can indeed serve as reference and point of departure to more generalized accounts on populist discourse and Europe.

The methodological approach of this paper borrows heavily from Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), especially Fairclought’s and Wodak’s works. The data collected are electoral manifestos, press releases, and speeches of the parties corresponding to the period 2013 – 2017. Its systematic description, analysis and comparison are conducted with the software Wordsmith 7.0 and a more nuanced discourse analysis is undertaken with ATLAS.ti 8.0. Results show concrete patterns of signification for each party derived from the connections, in the case of Podemos, between human right, populist and critical-Europeanist discourses and, in the case of AfD, from a combination of nationalist, populist and Eurosceptic discourses.

References:
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Right- and left-wing populism I

“Producerism”: a core element of right-wing/populist discourse

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The term ›populism‹ has become a buzzword in recent times and has gained much prominence in academic, political and media discourse. Yet, the very core of what is meant by ›populism‹ still remains disputed. When it is not just understood as a particular style in rhetoric and performance but linked to some way of (thin) ideology there is often the doubled confrontation between ›Us/The People‹ and ›Them‹ – being either the ›elite‹ or the ›others‹. U.S. scholar Chip Berlet has presented a model in which he presents the lower and middle classes as the main addressees of right-wing populist messages and discourse as being squeezed between the ›corrupt elite‹ on the one hand and the ›lazy and dangerous underclasses‹ on the other hand. This model refers to the self-description of the lower and middle classes as being ›productive‹ while the others are more or less ›parasitic‹.

While this paper does not argue that ›producerism‹ is the core element of right-wing/populist discourse there should be no doubt that it is one of the central dimensions of right-wing/populist worldview and discourse. ›Producerism‹ in right-wing/populist discourse takes its particular examples and references mainly from the national context while it shares some basic assumptions and topoi transnationally. Furthermore, right-wing/populist ›producerist‹ discourse is embedded in a respective political culture in which also other political protagonists might make use of ›producerist‹ frames. The paper investigates right-wing/populist ›producerist‹ discourse in Germany making use of examples from the last decade as well as from several eras of German history and discusses a typology of ›producerism‹ in order to invite an international conversation on the relevance of ›producerism‹ for right-wing/populist discourse/populism and nationalism on an international level.
Brexit II

‘We want to trust the people’ - National identity construction and the EU Referendum

Nora Wenlz

In times of rising Euroscepticism, the interplay of a supranational European identity and various national identities remains a hotly debated topic. Seeing as these identities are frequently renegotiated in moments of historical impact for a nation (Risse 2010), this paper examines discursive identity constructions during the United Kingdom EU membership referendum 2016. Drawing on the Discourse Historical Approach to Critical Discourse Studies (Reisigl & Wodak 2001, 2009), this paper illustrates how political actors strategically construct different visions of British national identity to support their arguments for or against the EU. To this purpose, a corpus-assisted critical discourse study of transcribed parliamentary proceedings in the House of Commons between May 7th 2015 and June 15th 2016 is undertaken.

This paper focuses specifically on a sub-corpus of utterances by Conservative politicians, as the Conservative party under David Cameron had no official stance on EU membership and allowed MPs to campaign for both sides. Corpus linguistic methods such as the examination of frequency and keyword lists show that use of the first person plural pronoun "we", as well as appeals to "the people", are particularly high amongst members of the Conservative party. This is in line with Billig’s (1995) observation that national identities are often subtly reinforced by politicians via strategic language use for the creation of in- and out-groups. Although members of the same political party can be assumed to have roughly similar ideological backgrounds, further analysis of my data thus shows that arguments for and against membership are founded on differing conceptions of what "we" encompasses. In light of these findings, it becomes clear that facts brought forth by the Remain campaign failed to convince a broad range of voters, as their reasoning presupposed an understanding of Britishness that did not adequately address their constituents’ sense of self.

References:


Brexit II

“A deeply divided nation”: spatial metaphor in news reports and opinion pieces on the British EU referendum

Josie Ryan & Veronika Koller

The results of a number of elections and referenda around the world have suggested a reconfiguration of the established political order in recent years. These shifts have been attributed to a rise in populism as a dominant political paradigm reacting to immigration and liberal social changes, as well as expressing nationalism and rejecting globalization (Inglehart & Norris 2016). June 2016, the referendum on whether Britain should leave or remain in the European Union showed a very close result, with just over half the electorate voting one way (52% for Leave) and just under half (48% for Remain) voting the other.

In this paper, we investigate how the electorate are represented through metaphor in the three most popular national news websites on the day following the ‘Brexit vote’. Spatial cognition is primary in language (Levinson 2003) and particularly so in political language (Chilton 2004), or as in this case, meta-political language. Analysis of reports and opinion pieces from the BBC news website, the Guardian website, and the Mail Online, show a prevalence of spatial metaphor, working in combination with other conceptually related metaphors to construct the notion of a divided nation in this snapshot of discourse on the EU referendum. We analysed the data for metaphor scenarios (Musolff 2006), which provide a more thorough and complex account than Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) of the metaphors used to describe and analyse the voting behavior and motivations of the British electorate in the EU referendum. With dramatic and divisive elections happening around the world, we aim to demonstrate how the recent populist impetus is constructed via metaphor in meta-political discourse.

Key words: cognitive metaphor theory, metaphor scenarios, meta-political discourse, Brexit vote

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Brexit II

Walls or bridges: the language of populism in the UK and in the US

D. Milizia

Despite its fuzziness and the difficulty in tying it down to a single description (Moffit 2016), the use of the term ‘populism’ is increasingly growing. Some political scientists (Mudde 2004) define it as a ‘thin ideology’ that sets up a framework: that of a pure people versus a corrupt people, or simply the “people” and the powerful. This definition seems to perfectly fit Britain, where those who voted Leave refer to themselves as “the people” and boast of having “smashed the elite”.

It seems that British politics is being reshaped by populism: after being able to avoid referendums until 1975, the British people after only two years of membership were already called to the polls to decide on whether Britain should remain a member of the European Community. After fourty years, they were still reluctant Europeans (George 1994) and were thus called to turn out again to try and settle the vexed constitutional question of its relationship with the EU. Britain has thus succumbed to the populist virus by deciding to apply the most powerful tool in the populist box: the referendum.

The clearest recent manifestations of the populist surge are, in fact, Brexit and Donald Trump’s victory: what unites their policies is the promise to break free of constraints, and the tendencies of drawing up the drawbridge and creating new borders, even walls (see Wodak 2015). Today, Americanism not globalism is the American credo, Trump has declared: the world is a nasty place and wise nations should build walls to keep it out. Hence, the new political divide is no longer left versus right but drawbridge up versus drawbridge down (Milizia 2016).

This study is a corpus-driven investigation that relies on a spoken corpus of both American and British politicians. The purpose of the research is to analyze the language politicians use to refer to these issues and these fears, in particular the fear of the outsider and the foreigner, i.e. of immigration – the ISSUE of immigration, the PLAGUE of immigration, the THREAT of immigration – which is regarded by many as the principal cause that pushed towards Brexit (Milizia 2017). Preliminary studies show that from Boris Johnson to Nigel Farage to Theresa May, as well as David Cameron who instead fought “with all his heart and soul” to stay in the Union, British politicians’ clinching argument is always the same: the “people” have spoken.

Hence, we will look at terms like people, nation, state, homeland, country, to see whether and to what extent they are being redefined, as well as at recognizable idiosyncratic phrases, neologisms and in particular metaphors that emerge from political discourse.

The data comes from the two institutional websites, whitehouse.gov and number10.gov.uk. The software used to analyze and compare the data is WordSmith Tools 7.0 (Scott 2017).
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Slogans, metaphor and rhetoric I

Speaker persona as ideological message: how do we interpret political slogans?

E. Lake

Political slogans are of interest within socio-pragmatics as they are often semantically meaningless; missing truth-conditional content required for interpretation. Context (broadly speaking) has been proposed as a means of resolving implicit content, but attention has not been paid to how contextual social meanings (c.f. Eckert 1989, 2008; Podesva 2007, Zhang 2005) are exploited as grounds for truth-conditional interpretation. I argue that social meaning (specifically speaker persona) is crucial for implicit content recovery. This strategy allows politicians to draw hearers to coded interpretations without explicitly uttering them; thus reserving room for plausible deniability. Political messages can thus penetrate deeply into the population, without tying politicians to an on-the-record “socially taboo” position.

First, I take the Brexit vote as a case study, considering the persona of Boris Johnson through a sociolinguistic analysis of his cross-contextual presentation of self. I argue that he constructs a “twentieth century aristocrat” persona through both the extra-linguistic and linguistic levels (e.g. exploiting /a:/ vs /a/ variation, heightened conservative RP, “old fashioned” lexical choices). On recovering this, a hearer retrieves consistent ideologies (English nationalism, immigration control, Empire nostalgia) to arrive at the possible interpretation: take back control of English identity, from immigrants. These alternatives are supported by EU referendum voting data (Clarke et al 2017).

Second, I apply this socio-pragmatic framework to Make America Great Again, arguing that interpretation would crash under Obama, as the presuppositions the slogan triggers are not recoverable given his persona, and ideologies consistent with it.

Slogans can thus function as a type of dogwhistle language: coded messages intended for a subset of the population (c.f. Henderson and McCready 2017, Khoo). Populist discourse relies on dogwhistled interpretations for message transmission whilst maintaining public deniability, reflecting the power of this socio-pragmatic strategy.

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Slogans, metaphor and rhetoric I

Migration, Myth, Metaphor: The Cultural Politics of the Wolf as Predator and Prey

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My current research project is an innovative and unconventional Humanities-led study of the widespread connections between two species, wolf and human. The overarching question of this project is how culture impacts our treatment of nature, a process that can be shown in nuce by the wolf metaphor in world literature. This comparative literature project examines the cultural history of deeply rooted phobias that tie the wolf to migration and territory, and analyses how dehumanizing metaphors in current populist discourse reflect cultural anxieties about the migrant as ‘alien’ Other.

This research comes at a critical time in view of ongoing debates over migration in Europe, the racially-charged political climate in the U.S., and the global spread of Neo-Fascist groups promoting racial ideology. Populist discourse on the topic of migration abounds in discriminating language comparing immigrants and refugees to animals considered dangerous and parasitic, as journalists have pointed out (cf. Swarms, Floods, and Marauders: The toxic metaphors of the migration debate, The Guardian, 10 Aug. 2015). The wolf metaphor in particular has found increasing use in the media, from attention-grabbing headlines (Donald Trump supporters tell immigrants ‘The wolves are coming, you are the hunted – as race hate fears rise, The Independent, 9 Nov 2016), commentaries on dictators (The Wolf of Pyongyang, Foreign Affairs, 9 Aug. 2017), and articles on ‘lone-wolf’ attacks (We Must Track and Trap Lone Wolf Terrorists, The Observer, 25 Nov. 2014). MetaWolf studies the imagery and language used for the wolf in literature and the media and how they inform and influence – frequently to the point of inflaming – public discourse in a way that impacts seemingly disparate issues: migrant rights, resettlement efforts, and wolf conservation programmes.

As scholars have pointed out, needs to interact with fields it has traditionally not had much contact with, such as world literature, myth studies, and biology (cf. Bretell/Holifield 2014). There is extensive literature on cultural diversity and on biodiversity, but very little on the relations between the two (Heyd 2010). My paper will transcend this division of perspectives by reading biopolitics and biodiversity in a sense that dissolves the boundaries between human and animal, and by applying the concept of biodiversity to the notion of multiculturalism. Through a highly interdisciplinary methodology that brings together migration studies, zoology, and the study of world literature my paper will serve as a summary of my ongoing research into the rhetoric of political violence. Its two core questions are: How are animal metaphors, specifically the wolf
metaphor, employed across literature and the media in support of a “migrant as threat” narrative? How and why are wolf mythology and imagery appropriated by nationalist groups?

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Mainstream and margins

*Populist political communication going mainstream? Populism in the discursive and communicative strategies of mainstream centre-left political parties in Western Europe*

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In light of the electoral rise of anti-establishment forces and vigorous electoral campaigns as seen in the U.S and during the Brexit referendum, the study of populism has perhaps never been more important. Yet the existing literature tends to focus on the political, economic and social drivers of populism. The rhetoric and discursive elements of populism and more specifically how this is dispersed throughout party systems and adopted by mainstream parties is still underexplored.

Presenting a case for a qualitative approach to study the discursive characteristics of populism, the article brings forward an analytical framework that pinpoints and provides a more in-depth understanding of the distinct characteristics of populist political communication. Through a three-part sequential analysis, the article examines and compares the extent to which populist political communication has entered the British Labour Party and the Swedish Social Democratic Party’s communication after the turn of the 21st century. This communicative construction includes stressing the peoples’ virtues, describing the people as a monolithic entity, uniting with the people, defence of popular sovereignty and reinforcing an opposing threat against the people by communicating elite-negativity and limitation of elite power. The paper further broadens the scope by also focusing on the cornerstones of populism – the people and the elite. It considers exactly how the two main groups are constructed and articulated when mainstream political parties make use of populist political communicative strategies. The paper makes two main substantial contributions - it provides an alternative route to empirically study populism by explicitly approaching it from a communication perspective, whilst proposing a new way of qualitatively assessing populist political communication. Such an approach sheds light on the rhetorical construction of the people and the threats that are expressed.
Mainstream and margins

Populism as Greek mainstream politicians’ political style

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Moffitt and Tormney discuss populism as a political style claiming that: “the concept of political style allows us to rethink populism by placing its performative dimensions at front and center, and gives us a chance to reflect on the complex relationship between style and context” (2014:394). Following the above conceptualisation of populism, and political style as “the repertoires of performance that are used to create political relations” (Moffitt and Tormey 2014:394) in this paper I examine how Greek political party leaders construct their political style through their talk-in-interaction. In particular, I examine what interactional strategies are used by political party leaders, and how these are being responded to by journalists, in the course of one-on-one televised interviews broadcast during the double 2012 election campaigns.

In my dataset, Greek political party leaders coming from diverse political spectrums – ranging from the radical left and socialism to the centre-right - when challenged, use conversational violence (Luginbühl 2007) to attack journalists; an interactional move reminiscent of populist politicians’ talk (Simon-Vandenbergen 2008). As I will argue, by attacking journalists, (Greek) politicians appropriate features of populist politicians’ talk normalising those features as mainstream, redefining thus media populism (see Mazzoleni 2008). Greek journalists in turn by neutralising (Hutchby 1996) politicians’ attacks seem both to assist the former in building their (populist) political style and to co-legitimatised populist performance by making it an integral part of institutional talk-in-interaction norms. In that sense, the knowledge produced for the overhearing audience, through the co-construction of institutional talk-in-interaction, (the epistemology of TV journalism in Ekström’s 2002 and Roth’s 2002 terms), is the legitimatisation and normalisation of populism as the mainstream political style.

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Mainstream and margins

Nationalist discourse on the fringes of the Polish political scene

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There are multiple statements about the far right that political scientists and experts in the field need to repetitively argue. For a long period of time, if not even till today, researchers were fighting against the stereotype misleadingly linking the far right with neo-Nazism or neo-fascism. Noticeably annoyed with this common approach, political scientists were constantly trying to remediate this conviction by repeating the following conclusion in various scientific papers: Neo-Nazis are right-wing extremists, but not every right-wing extremist is a neo-Nazi. The current tendency to equate the radical right with the term ‘populism’ seems to replace the previously mentioned misconception about the far right. The purpose of my presentation will be to present some arguments against it. I will argue that not all extreme right organisations are populist and neither are all populist organisations extreme right. As a matter of fact these are two different phenomena.

While the focus of my current scientific research is on the German far right scene, the abovementioned hypothesis will be based in this particular paper on the example of Polish right wing organisations and their ideological core, which is sparsely present in wider scientific discourse on the international level. Presenting their profile may conceivably be of a huge benefit to the multidisciplinary and multinational discussion during the conference. The paper will focus on political and ideological programmes of the following extreme right organisations currently active in Poland: the All-Polish Youth, the National Revival of Poland, the National Radical Camp and the National Movement. They are all perceived as nativist and nationalist and clearly differentiate from the group of populist far right parties, with – now virtually non-existent – the League of Polish Families being its representative per excellence on the Polish political scene.

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Catalonia I

Sentiment analysis of the nationalist discourse in Catalonia

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The main objective of this paper is to analyse the electoral programs from the parties who participated in the 2017 elections to the Catalan Parliament. Catalan secessionists’ and Catalan unionists’ rhetoric is compared and contrasted to determine the language usage by nationalist parties in terms of discourse. Rather than relying on purely qualitative analysis, we employ the analytical tools of corpus-based quantitative analysis, discourse analysis and sentiment analysis to provide objective data. Electoral programs are prepared to persuade the electorate with promises. According to (Wodak 1989), keywords are associated to a strong emotional and irrational reaction in the recipient. In this study we seek, among other things, to validate this assertion. Methodologically, we start by obtaining certain linguistic metrics commonly employed to characterise the sophistication of linguistic expression. We then look at the axiology of the messages of said parties by running the sentiment analysis tool Lingmotif (Moreno-Ortiz 2017) on the electoral programs. This tool offers easy-to-interpret visual representations of semantic orientation data (text polarity, sentiment intensity, sentiment profile), as well as a detailed qualitative analysis of the text in terms of its sentiment. We finally carry out a detailed manual analysis employing traditional discourse analysis methods.

Results unequivocally show higher sophistication of expression for the secessionist parties. Whether this fact is conducive to a success remains to be speculation since it is generally accepted that clear, concise expression is key to effective communication. On the other hand, the sentiment analysis results point to very different semantic orientation for some key terms such as ‘nationalism’ or ‘independence’, following generally a positive self-presentation and a negative other-presentation to (de-)emphasize negative/positive topics about Us/Them.

The results suggest that the Catalan nationalist rhetoric employs an intense, persuasive, highly emotional rhetoric which we believe is key to the eventual success in the election results.

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Catalonia I

The tensions between populism, institutionalism and liberal democracy: a Laclauian perspective on the Catalan secessionist urge

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Populism is often portrayed by literature as a political style or discourse with inherent anti-institutional and anti-(liberal)-democratic logics. In fact, at times, it even seems that there cannot be populisms in power in liberal democratic states: populism, whether due to its (alleged) tendencies towards the creation of antagonistic divisions, the disregarding of the rule of law or the development of irresponsible practices, would be prone to undermine the normal functioning of public institutions and would therefore be incapable of governing them without major upheavals. Nevertheless, empirical reality indicates the opposite: not only we find many historical and contemporary examples of populisms in power, but in fact, on numerous occasions, populist governments have acted as engines of institutional construction.

This article analyses the tensions that face populism when it handles the government of public institutions in democratic contexts. It does it by drawing from Laclau’s theory of populism, paying special attention to two notions usually understood as marginal within its theoretical edifice: on one hand, the understanding of populism as ‘foundational moment’ (as the historical period of institution of a new political regime); on the other, its theory of democracy, originally developed through the concept of ‘democratic revolution’ in Hegemony and Socialist Strategy and refined later on (Laclau 2001).

The article explores the potential contradictions between populism and institutions and populism and democracy by focusing on the development of a strong secessionist movement in Catalonia from 2010 onwards. It argues that the discursive repertoire and political tactics of the Catalan secessionist movement constitute vivid examples of, first, the “creative tensions” (to use García Linera’s (2011) notion) that emerge when populist practices (amplified in this case through its articulation with nationalism) are performed by a governmental ruling actor in conjunction with strong civil society movements. And second, of the ‘paradoxes’ (Mouffe 2000) that such populist attempt to change the existing political system entail for democratic practices.

References:

42

¡viva españa! redux: The Catalan independence movement and the rise of the right-wing Spanish nationalist party Ciudadanos

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Recent events around the Catalan independence have shown us that in the chess-game of politics, it is not until unprecedented moves are taken by one party that unprecedented counter-moves emerge. In effect, the activities of a movement that is self- and other-positioned as Catalan nationalist, and self-described as justified, democratic and rational (while other-defined as just the opposite), have led to a reawakening of Spanish nationalism. The latter, always there but for many years banalised and seldom obviated, has recently been captured and canalised by Ciudadanos, a party formed in 2006 to ‘combat’ Catalan nationalism in Catalonia, which in recent years has evolved into a Spain-wide party. Ciudadanos was the most-voted party in the Catalan elections of December 2017 and polls in early 2018 put it in first place as regards the voting preferences of the Spanish electorate. The party’s success is due to a clever monopolisation of the anti-independence vote inside of Catalonia, coupled with its self-presentation as a modernising ‘liberal’ party, which is, simultaneously, the most reliable guarantor of Spanish values and culture (including anti-Catalanism and displays of Spanish nationalism that are reminiscence of the Franco regime), all within 21st century ‘post-truth’ medialogies. This paper is an exploratory presentation of my preliminary analyses of the discursive construction of Ciudadanos and my understanding of its success. I will define key concepts in the discussion such as populism, nationalism, post-truth and medialogies, as I examine a selected range of discursive constructions appearing in the media and other public spheres.
Catalonia I

People’s quest for sovereignty? Victimisation, humiliation, and banal populism in the Spanish/Catalan clash

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Over the last years, the scholarship has analysed the Spanish/Catalan crisis in its multifaceted legal and political dimensions. However, only little attention has been paid to the way in which emotions and affective engagement have been playing a role in this clash. This paper focuses on this under-explored perspective, by linking a discursive analysis of emotions to theories of populism.

The public debate on the Spanish/Catalan crisis has been characterised by numerous emotional vectors that have also exacerbated the overall situation. Popular marches, the ostensive uses of flags, and the narratives in social media have been pushing nationalistic feelings on both sides. On the one hand, pro-independence videos/campaigns and social media (especially immediately before the “referendum” on the 1st of October 2017 and in its aftermath) have been emotionally shaping and perpetrating the clash. On the other hand, the Spanish nationalism re-births along with the widespread use of the Spanish flag. A mix of anger, victimisation, humiliation, disenchantment, and a sense of saturation is what citizens have been feeling in Catalonia and the rest of Spain. Developing a discursive approach on the Spanish/Catalan case, this paper argues that a focus on emotions is a fruitful perspective through which the populist dimension of this phenomenon has to be studied. Populist and nationalist discourses will be analysed paying special attention to the use of symbolic vectors and their role in identity formation, proliferation of political narratives, and in re-shaping the democratic grammar.
Right- and left-wing populism II

Republican populism and Marxist populism: perspectives from Bolivia and Ecuador

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The paper I want to present at the conference is based on the analysis of the political processes that took place in Bolivia and Ecuador at the beginning of this century. After a period of strong political instability, both countries knew some substantial transformations following the elections of Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador.

The comparison between both cases appears quite relevant in order to distinguish between different kinds of populist strategies. Indeed, the Revolución Ciudadana in Ecuador as well as the Proceso de Cambio in Bolivia were based on a constant and permanent reference to the people as the subject of a new history after the collapse of the former political systems. This strategy as a strong influence both on the conquest of the institutional power itself, but also on the way the new governments were to rule their countries.

This paper aims at studying the interactions between the populist strategies and the state apparatuses once the elections won by Correa and Morales. The comparison allows to introduce one striking difference between both processes: on the one hand, the people called by the Revolución Ciudadana mainly lies upon a Republican imaginary, while the reference to the people as indigenous-native-peasant in Bolivia tends to anchor socially this new political subject in the Bolivian political history.

In a nutshell, this paper will try to present the use of different populist strategies in Bolivia and Ecuador in order to create some new hegemonic blocs, and their impacts on the concrete governments of those countries.

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Jeremy Corbyn’s surprising near-victory at the 2017 British general elections has been hailed as evidence of the rise of left-wing populism in Great Britain. While populist movements are usually associated with nationalistic and xenophobic ideas, Corbyn’s message resounded well with British progressives for its clarion call for ideals of social justice which the Labour Party had seemingly neglected for a long time. Political and media observers hotly debated the real nature of Corbyn’s populism which, not dissimilarly from Bernie Sanders’ in the USA, was clearly distant from right-wing populism but shared with it a decisively anti-establishment message.

This paper will first analyse the generally hostile reactions of British media to Corbyn’s left-wing populism. By discussing Corbyn’s alleged populism, British media address the nature itself of populism, seen as a deviation from the standards of politics. Indeed, Corbyn’s seemingly populist policies are viewed in total contrast to those of the mainstream parties. The paper will then analyse Corbyn’s language by analysing a corpus of his 2017 speeches. Corbyn’s populism will be viewed in the context of some of the key texts on populism, including Canovan (1981, 1984), Taggart (2000), Laclau (2005) and Moffitt’s (2016) recent work on populist “style”, as well as Wodak’s (2015) account of current right-wing and racist discourse (2015).
Right- and left-wing populism II

Media, Populism and Nationalism in Revolutionary Cuba: Constructing the Cuban ‘people’ in Times of National Debate

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This paper analyses the discursive strategies by which the unity of a political group is constructed, that is, the strategies that articulate ‘the people’ as a collective identity. More particularly, it focuses on the way in which the Cuban state-run press has constructed a populist revolutionary identity. While conceptualised differently, I analyse the way in which populist and nationalist articulations intertwine in discourse. Therefore, I study the articulation of a people-versus-elite (internal) and a people-versus-imperialism (external) confrontation. This paper sheds light into the analysis of populist discourse in contexts in which it has become hegemonic, and institutionalised. I demonstrate that, in these situations, ‘the enemy’ can be articulated both through a populist and a nationalist discourse. In the case of Cuba this means that the enemy can be internalised, blaming a bureaucratic elite for distorting the people-Party unity, or externalised, blaming the United States for plotting against national sovereignty.

In this paper, I contend that concepts and identities as necessarily unstable, and open-ended. If there is one revolution that claims to have happened in the name of the people, that is surely the Cuban Revolution. The articulation of Cuban hegemonic discourse is analysed through the lenses of Granma, the official organ of the Communist Party of Cuba. In this paper, I systematically analyse over 500 news stories during the national debates that preceded the 4th (1990-1991) and the 6th (2010-2012) congresses of the Communist Party of Cuba. The hegemonic discourse of the press is then discussed through in-depth interviews with over 30 Cuban journalists. This double focus allows to unveil the media role in the construction of asymmetric power relations, and to account for discursive resistance.
Traditional political parties underwent a radical makeover in the last few decades both as a result of global impactful economic changes and to cope with the increasing indifference and lack of trust of people towards politics and democracy (Mair 2013). Not only did this climate of uncertainty pave the way for the rise of new populist parties on both sides of the political spectrum (Lorenzetti 2016; 2018), but it also led to an increased “marketisation” of mainstream politics to gain the consensus of a volatile and mediatized electorate. These changes are especially evident in the rhetoric adopted. Political communication has become more focused on storytelling, crafting impactful messages through emotional and often aggressive overtones and sensory passpartout words rather than on argumenting one’s policy, while the language tends to be simple and understandable, thus mirroring the casual language of a private conversation in the political arena. This enables politicians to assert their identity as “everyday people” (Kazin 2016).

“Fetishising” the people as an idealised entity is commonly viewed as a core populist trait (Canovan 1999; Taggart 2000). However, the term “the people” and it denotatum are deliberately ambiguous, and not all populist politicians target the same electorate.

This contribution investigates the discursive construction of “the people” in a corpus of electoral speeches from different politicians, namely Donald Trump, Bernie Sanders, Theresa May, Jeremy Corbyn, Matteo Salvini, Beppe Grillo and other members of the M5S in Italy in the period 2016-2018. The theoretical framework adopted is critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk 1997) and in particular the discourse-historical approach (Wodak 2015). Data show that evocative storytelling is a major strategy on both sides of the political spectrum, while dysphemism and the use of an outspoken style also play a key role as strategies to address the electorate (Allan and Burridge 2001).

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Speeches and debates

Populism, the voice of the people united against. Illustrations in the Caribbean with Dominican Presidents

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In 1937, more than 20,000 Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent were killed in a few days by the army and the Dominican police forces (Moya Pons 2012 or Roorda 1996). This massacre is still undermined by the Dominican authorities (Roorda 1998 or Theodat 2003). The President at that time, the General Trujillo never officially ordered or called for an extermination but the results of number of deaths is a fact...

In 2013, an historical change in the Dominican constitution modified the definition of citizenship (Richard & Hailon 2015). In consequence, 200.000 of Dominicans of Haitian descent lost their one and only citizenship then became stateless. This process for the President Medina was often display in the media as the ‘second genocide’ or the ‘civil genocide’ (Polino 2016).

Our purpose in this paper is to compare some of the main public speeches of these two Presidents of the Dominican Republic. Their rhetoric for a national identity and unity are directed against the same group of persons. We will focus on how is named this targeted group: by their nationality, ‘Haitians’; by a geographical perspective, ‘our neighbors’; according a temporary status, ‘migrants’ or ‘frontiers workers’ etc. We would like to question the discursive aspects of these populist leaders in the out-grouping process of their discriminatory speeches.

We shall examine the socio-historical contextualization of their discourses and then put into perspective the pragmatic and nominal dimensions of such productions with traumatic or deadly ends.

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Speeches and debates

Populism, elitism and pluralism in political speeches

C. Schoor

How do we differentiate between a left-wing and a right-wing populist style? This question remains unanswered despite noteworthy contributions on the topic (e.i. March, 2017; Markou, 2017; Stavrakakis & Katsambekis, 2014). A new model based on Critical Discourse Analysis assists with clarifying these differences, without any pretense towards untangling the messy knot of political style and ideology. Utilizing this model, developed for a doctoral dissertation on political style (to be completed in January 2019), political speeches can be analyzed on having populist, elitist and pluralist features. Based on theories of Van Dijk (1998, 2015) and Wodak (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015; Wodak, 2009), and on literature on populism, (e.i. Laclau, 2005; Mudde, 2004; Rooduijn, 2013) elitism (e.i. P. Bachrach, 1971, 1980; Mackie, 2009) and pluralism (e.i. Blokland, 2011), speeches are assessed on five elements - ‘the people’, ‘the political elite’, ‘democracy’, ‘politics’ and ‘the context’ -, at three levels - cognitive, social and discourse level -, thereby deducing the political style. Earlier practice with the model (Schoor, 2017) has led to refinements accommodating the exploration of a pure populist style alongside a mixed populist-pluralist and a mixed populist-elitist style, which is crucial for the here proposed paper.

My hypothesis is that right-centered populists more likely combine populism with elitism, whereas left-centered populists more likely combine populism with pluralism. The reason is that populism and elitism both are exclusive (see ‘the people’ as one group), as opposed to pluralism’s inclusiveness, and addressing ‘the people’ as a unified group is a hallmark of right-wing politics. Also, populism and pluralism both denounce the elite its exclusive right to govern. This anti-elite attitude is more inclined to be associated with left-wing politics. Speech analyses of left and right-centered politicians, in the US (Trump, Sanders), the UK (Johnson, Farage, Corbyn), and the Netherlands (Wilders, Baudet, Roemer), will serve to test this hypothesis.

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Speeches and debates


Annariina Seppänen

My paper focuses on the political rhetoric of the United States Republican Party in a historically and politically interesting time period. The 2008 financial crisis contributed to the emergence of two prominent grass-roots movements, the Tea Party and the Occupy Wall Street, that shared a strong distrust of the American elites as well as a discontent with centrist politics and the status quo. As these movements gained support among the American public, some politicians reacted to the people’s frustrations by altering their political tactics and utilised the anti-establishment sentiment. Especially, during the 2016 presidential election season, anti-establishment politics and populist candidates were on the centre stage of American politics.

My paper discusses the anti-establishment rhetoric present in the Republican primary election debates during the 2008, 2012 and 2016 campaigns. More specifically, the paper investigates, through a careful analysis of words, phrases and discourses, how certain Republican presidential hopefuls portray themselves as political outsiders representing the “real America” or the “American people” and criticise the “corrupt” and “out-of-touch” political elite in Washington. The paper focuses mainly on how the anti-establishment stances are constructed and manifested in the candidates’ debate rhetoric as well as on why do the candidates employ anti-establishment rhetoric. Furthermore, it will be studied how “the establishment” is defined in the debates. The primary campaigns will be compared and contrasted with each other and the possible differences and development will be analysed.

This paper is a part of my ongoing doctoral research focusing on the definitions of American conservatism in the rhetoric of Republican Party primary election debates in 2008, 2012 and 2016. The anti-establishment rhetoric employed by certain Republican candidates plays also a role in developing the Party’s political ideology.
Social media, interviews and vox pops

Strategies of Populist Discourse on Social Media: The Example of Marion Maréchal-Le Pen

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Over the past years, social media have gained importance in political competition (Longhi 2013, Frame/Brachotte 2015, Boyadjian 2016). Politicians use social networks like Twitter and Facebook to create their own discursive spaces for addressing and mobilising their potential electorate online. Spreading information as an ideology broker without any journalistic barrier helps maintaining the sovereignty of content-interpretation (Spitzmüller/Warnke 2011: 180), and, to this purpose, social media serve politicians as a “propre dispositif informationnel” (Marcheva 2013: 202).

In my contribution, I will analyse the populist strategies of mediatisation of a young politician of the French radical right-wing populist and nationalist party Front National, Marion Maréchal-Le Pen, niece of the party’s chairwoman and granddaughter of its founder. Following a CDA perspective (van Dijk 2008, Fairclough 2013, among others), this corpus-based analysis of her digital presence on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook shows a specific use of linguistic and multimodal resources as a means of strategic framing of political content (Fillmore [1982] 2006, Helfrich/Mancera 2016). In particular, I will focus on Maréchal-Le Pen's use of searchable “technomots” (Paveau 2013) such as hashtags and mentions as a means of polarization between a fabricated ‘us’ and a negatively connoted ‘them’. Furthermore, by accentuating her own political ‘family’ and presenting ‘the people’ as a homogeneous group, she distances herself from the political establishment, another important strategy of populist politicians.

References:


Social media, interviews and vox pops
‘The worst sort of Poles’ and enemies of the nation: populist discourses of the ‘people’ in Poland

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Poland is one of the countries where populism has not only presented the possibility to ascend its followers to power but where populists have already entered into the mainstream politics. Law and Justice (PiS) party has, since its election to Parliament in 2015, orchestrated spectacular backlash against liberal values and rule of law, quickly earning the status of ‘Europe’s problem child’ (The Economist 2017). The PiS-government has run into conflict with the country’s constitution, sparking international criticisms and provoking an official EU investigation into Poland’s rule of law. Identity politics and the redefinition of the Polish ‘national community’ is one of the core pillars of the government’s social engineering. Jarosław Kaczyński, the party leader, frequently appeals to national ‘patriotism’, promotes ‘the truth’ (gazeta.pl 2017), denounces ‘corrupt’ elites and ‘foreign enemies’ (wyborcza.pl 2016).

This paper explores the populist conception of ‘the people’ and the responses this discourse generates across the political spectrum in Poland. It examines communicative strategies, practices, the use of on-line portals and social media by political parties and newly created social movements. It investigates the discursive construction of ‘Poles’ in official political discourses, their attributed qualities, values and interests, as well as the criteria for inclusion and exclusion of ‘others’ (refugees, migrants, foreigners). The paper employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) to explain discourse productivity of political representations of ‘the people’ and the way these visions produce and re-produce the world they define. It draws on the three-dimensional model of discourse analysis suggested by Fairclough (1995): 1) textual; 2) inter-textual; 3) contextual. The model is based on the principle that texts can only be understood in relation to webs of other texts/discourses and in relation to the social context in which they are created.

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Social media, interviews and vox pops

Politicians and Populism in Hungary

Norbert Merkovity

Keywords: thematic analysis, political communication, populism

The economic difficulties that Europe had to face have created a general dissatisfaction among the citizens. Due to the disappointment of the traditional political parties, a new era of populist leaders have emerged in European politics. Hungary is considered as one of the most affected countries of populism and in spite of the 2018 elections it is not likely to change. But what is populism? Who are populists? How does it affect democracy? These frequently asked questions have been answered by many scholars in many different ways. In this research populism is taken as a political communication style that can be used by any politician regardless their political orientation. Instead of arguing the altering concept of populism the objective of this research is to investigate how the politicians themselves see populism: how they perceive the connection between democracy and populism, why the populist rhetoric can be successful, and how the media contributes to it. This research concentrates on the analysis of eight Hungarian politicians’ semi-structured interviews that were conducted in person and with the aim to cover the political spectrum of Hungary including members from parties that are considered to be populists. After the transcription, the method of thematic analysis was used in order to identify and analyze patterns occurring in the interviews. The politicians’ perception of populism suggests that after all the global phenomenon of populism has many faces with diverse effects on the society. Based on the analysis, three different variations of populism can be observed: (1) populism that resonates only in the political sphere, (2) populism that is observable in the political and the social sphere and (3) transformative populism that have effects on the social, political and media system.
Social media, interviews and vox pops

‘I voted AfD because …‘: Analysing voter motivation and engagement with populist discourses in written vox pops

V. Koller & M. Miglbauer

Over the past few years, right-wing populism has been on the rise in Europe, with both left-wing and right-wing parties and policies gaining considerable success in various countries. Among those parties is the right-wing German party AfD (Alternative für Deutschland/Alternative for Germany), which received almost 13 per cent of the vote in the German national elections in 2017.

We analyse the motivation of AfD voter against a discourse about the supporters of right-wing populist parties that centres on people who are socio-economically disadvantaged, xenophobic and embrace the populist ideas voiced by such parties. Our analysis shows that voters both reinforce and counter such a discourse on populism. The data comprise 529 postings written by AfD voters which we took from the comments section of the article ‘Why did you vote for the AfD?’, published in the German newspaper Die Zeit on election day.

In the analysis we focus on topics, social actor representation and appraisal to identify the deciding factors for casting one’s vote for the AfD. We further show how AfD supporters and voters construct themselves as such by analysing how they reinforce or counter the discourse on supporters for right-wing parties.

Our findings suggest that stereotypical description of voters for right-wing populist parties need to be revised in the face of written vox pops from those voters.
Analysing discourses on populism in media, academia and politics: How (and why) is the concept ‘populism’ used in news coverage of the European Elections of 2014?

Jana Goyvaerts

Despite much talk about the rise of ‘populism’ as a framework for analysing contemporary politics, and some critical reflections on this, there is remarkably little research that systematically studies how the meaning of ‘populism’ has been constructed, and how this could be explained. As Stavrakakis (2017a, p. 4) states: “When we study populism, we talk about populism (...) and language is never innocent.” That is why to the question “What exactly do we, as discourse and rhetoric researchers, mean by ‘populism’” (as stated in the CFP of this conference), we should add “and how can we analyse and understand the use of the concept of populism?”

Based on a thorough literature review of existing meta-analyses of discourses about ‘populism’, this paper argues that we need systematic empirical analysis of discourses about populism in different contexts, with discourse theory as the most suitable framework for it. It argues that such an analysis needs to take into account at least two major dimensions: 1) How are negative, neutral and positive discourses about populism structured, who produces such discourses, and how do they relate to broader political struggles?, and 2) What do the complex and multidirectional relations between discourses about populism in politics, media, and academia look like? As a starting point for answering these questions, we will perform an exploratory research to analyse how the signifier ‘populism’ acquires meaning in relation to other signifiers in journalistic, academic and political discourse.

To explore this relation, the paper analyses journalistic, academic and political discourse as found in Flemish media coverage of the European elections of 2014. The paper will pay specific attention to how discourses about populism conflate populism with nationalism and racism, and how this contributes to the delegitimization of populism both on the Left and the Right. In this manner the paper contributes to broader insights in the nature and consequences of this conflation between populism and nationalism for wider public debate about populism and its relation to democratic politics.
European right-wing populism is usually based on discourses promoting a state rebordering in a transnationalising world. However, scholars often focus their research at the national scale avoiding the specificity of the regions located along national borders which are strongly impacted by globalized flows (people, goods and money) and characterized by a series of ethno-nationalist controversies. The current research addresses the case of populist discourses in the Swiss-Italian border area, an example of an economically-integrated region due to the daily cross-border commuting of 60,000 Italian workers. Strong populist parties have been framing issues related to the cross-border relations on both sides of this state border. Considering the Northern League in Italy and the League dei ticinesi in Switzerland, the research will provide a Critical Discourse Analysis of a series of party and mass-mediated texts to highlight the specificity of the populist discourse in terms of “rebordering” within a borderland context. There will be a focus on how these parties frame the group of cross-border Italian workers, which represent economic scapegoats for the Swiss league and an electoral constituency for the Italian League. Finally, we will also explore their common vision of “People” and “Nation” favoring a co-operative logic between these two parties in spite of an opposite value of Italian commuters in their respective discourses.

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The hegemony of populism: The people and antagonism in Putin and Navalny

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The paper addresses Putin’s political hegemony using post-structural approaches mainly advocated by Laclau and Mouffe (2001), Glynos (2013) and Howarth (2010). It analyses the function of the Russian National Strategy and its politically correct analogue – the concept of the Russian World. Both of them articulate the ‘people’ as a multi-ethnic singularity of the ‘sovereign state’ through a chain of equivalences ‘the population united by Russian traditions and orthodox religion = Russian nation = the sovereign state = authoritative governmental apparatus = stability of the social order’ and antagonizing it to the concept of liberal democracy and Western idea of ‘sovereign individuality’ (National Security Strategy 2015).

In this context, ‘Bolotnaya’ protest and other anti-Putin movements, which eventually escalated in Navalny’s campaign, are officially recognised as a threat to social stability and state sovereignty. Thus, I argue that the Russian National Security Strategy has become a unique mode of governmental reason, production of ideologically recognised subjects and undemocratic order of power relations. Apparently, such a legal regime imposes the populism as the only possible type of political formations since the opposition doesn't have any chance to challenge the social order unless to radicalise it.

Thus, the current oppositional struggle for leadership attempts to exploit the logic of populism. Appealing to the Russian constitution, Navalny aims at a defense of human rights and freedoms. That provides a ground for re-articulation of the ‘people’ and the ‘enemy' within national borders. Consequently, it draws an internal frontier line between those who exercise power in the country and the ‘people’, focusing on issues of economic and social justice (Navalny 2018).

The paper aims to disclose evidence both from Kremlin rhetoric and the scope of discourses from oppositional leader Alexey Navalny to support the argument.

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Miscellaneous aspects I

Populism and Theatricality of Constitutional Politics: The Case of Turkey

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The global resurgence of populism is a phenomenon that defines today’s politics. And many populist actors have involved in constitutional politics. Through amendments of existing constitutions, or writing new ones, constitution-making has been a central issue for contemporary populism. The existing literature argue that populists abuse and change the existing constitutional arrangements to deconstruct the political regime in order to eliminate any constitutional limitations over their hold on political power. Recently, some other studies argue that there is a distinctive populist constitutional discourse, or populist constitutional theory, which is distinctive in terms of its conception of the constituent power, constitutional identity, and the scope of popular sovereignty. In this study, I argue that constitutional politics, different than ordinary legislation, provides a distinctive and important possibility for populists, and hence their interest. Constitutional politics – including the justification of amendments or new constitutions, constitution-making or amending, campaigning and propaganda, and referendum – becomes a stage for populists to ‘perform’ as the constituent subject. The ‘theatricality’ of populist constitutional politics is the focus of the paper’s analysis to explain how populist actors utilize constitutional politics, not to abuse the system, or deconstruct the regime, but the render themselves present as the constituent subject in the name of the people. Adopting discourse theory of populism (Laclau and the Essex School) and also Mouffet’s dramaturgical approach of populism as a political style, I analyze the Justice and Development Party of Turkey (JDP) and its constitutional politics since 2007, as my substantiating case, to show how constitution-making has become a mise-en-scène for the JDP and particularly for its leader R.T. Erdogan to invoke the constituent power of the people, render themselves above the law, and develop a revolutionary rhetoric.
Catalonia II

Catalonia, Scotland and the EU: Is a pan-European chain of equivalences between minority nationalism possible?

K. Vercin

“Catalan nationalists parade a Saltire beside their own flag.” (Leask, 2013) The picture which illustrated this article is a perfect way to introduce what will be the focus of our interest in this communication. We intend to present the convergence between the European demands of both Scottish and Catalan nationalism, and how much it is possible to talk of the formation of a chain of equivalences between them. As demonstrated by Ernesto Laclau in his notorious work On populist reason unfulfilled demands can come around together and form a chain of equivalence between them around an empty signifier (Laclau, 2002 : 73). The nature of these unsatisfied demands is unspecified. What matters is that the existing power cannot integrate them and they recognise each other as equivalent for that reason.

Both Scottish and Catalan nationalism have used a specific form of articulation between their claimed national identity, the national identity from which they want to be distinguished and European identity. Both cases were originally very different in the way they used to articulate these three identities, yet they converged around a similar articulation in the late 2000s: a common use of their allegedly stronger European identity against their Member State of Origin (whether it be Spain or the United Kingdom) to justify their right to self-determination. It again proves how competitive hegemonic projects, at the national level, can use Europe to prevail (Bulmer and Jospeh, 2016). But what is more here is that these challenging hegemonic domestic projects have also converged around a similar demand towards the same political order and have recognised each other as equivalent because of that: demanding recognition of the right to self-determination to the European Union in order to constitute themselves into Member States through internal enlargement.

By comparing the two main nationalist parties in these regions: the SNP for Scotland and the CDC (now rebranded PdeCAT) for Catalonia, and two NGOs indirectly linked to them (Scottish Independence Convention and Assemblea Nacional Catalana) we aim to provide a history of this convergence, the networks and shared demands they have formed and the limits to creating transnational chains of equivalence within the very specific polity that is the EU.
Gender and sexuality

The production of a threatened populus: ‘the introduction’ of gender in an East-European country

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I would like to go beyond labelling and dichotomies, such as ‘open’ vs. ‘closed’ societies, ‘post-truth’, ‘wave of populism’, ‘the failure of multiculturalism’, etc., and see the ongoing transformation of politics through an inductive, processual lens. I will cast a close-up look at a single empirical case that challenges the above notions when the conceptual tools of the Essex school post-structuralist discourse theory (PDT) are applied to it.

The case is chosen from the European periphery and at the cusp of the local floating of a novel empty signifier and the opening of a new political faultline. Heated debates erupted about the proposal by the government in Bulgaria to ratify the Council of Europe convention for the protection of women against violence and domestic violence. The point of contention is unexpected: it is not the greater state powers for intrusion in the domestic sphere and/or the perceived revocation of certain male privileges, it is ‘the introduction’ of the thing ‘gender’ in Bulgarian society. The (mis)readings of the term that few Bulgarians have heard before are peculiarly local and globalised at the same time (drawing on resources from continents away).

What is interesting for me is that a new division between elites and populus was drawn across a (nearly) blank terrain previously. I will look at the hegemonic dependencies and ensuing discursive dynamics as sides had to take shape and part from each other. While this was promoted by a number of authoritative actors as an opportunity to reconfigure themselves as part of the populus, my contention is that today not all populist discourse is produced (or ‘manipulated’) top-down.

Fierce debate and division erupted beyond the sanctioned public sphere and into private conversations and arguments in social networks. I undertake a close-up ethnographic look at examples of the latter, supplemented by interviews with the participants, to establish what are the persuasive effects and dependencies acting on the subject placed in a complex contemporary landscape of polycentric discursive production and layered partial hegemonies.
Gender and sexuality

In the name of the family and ethnic majority: Sexuality, ethno-nationalism and populism in the right-wing mobilisation in post-Yugoslav Croatia

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The proposed paper will address the central role that the discourses of populism and democracy have played in the recent anti-LGBTQ right-wing mobilisation in Croatia. Revolving around the demand to allow ‘the people’ to be heard, pro-democracy populism was first systematically used as a mobilising rhetoric in relation to the 2013 marriage referendum. The referendum, which asked for the constitutional ‘protection’ of a heterosexual marriage, was initiated by actors gathered in the ad-hoc civil initiative U ime obitelji (In the Name of the Family, INF). However, while keeping its name and its anti-LGBTQ political agenda, the initiative would soon embrace the ethno-nationalist ideology that has pervaded Croatian public discourses since the violent break-up of multi-ethnic Yugoslav federation. In the name of the Family quickly grew into a larger populist movement, having a great impact on the policies and established practices in various social fields spanning from the gender and family policies, to the media practices and electoral procedures. The purpose of this paper is to provide a better understanding of the content, meanings, and function of pro-democracy populism in relation to INF’s heterosexist and ethno-nationalist political agenda, and to account for the ways in which it has influenced the transformation of social practices and policies since 2013. In order to achieve this, the paper will analyse INF’s populist rhetoric and activities, and the ways they have been entangled with their heterosexist and ethno-nationalist politics. In the course of analysis, special attention will be payed to the meanings of ‘the people’ as the central political concept of this mobilisation, as well as to the contradictions and ruptures present in the INF’s discourses on sexuality, nation/ethnicity, and democracy.
Translation

A linguistic and translational perspective on hate-speech populism

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It is beyond doubt that modern political discourse is marked by violent rhetoric. In this paper we argue that the populist rhetoric characterized by either overt or covert hate speech has become a recognizable feature of the language of politics profiling itself as its distinct subdiscourse. Linguistically, populist political (sub)discourse is characterized by the following: the choice of lexemes with overtly offensive and discriminating meaning, excessive use of vulgarisms, raised tone of utterance with a specific intonation, cynical metaphors, ellipsis, limited choice of syntactic structures, the selective use of grammatical patterns to support strong persuasive techniques. In an effort to identify and describe main linguistic properties of such political (sub)discourse we cross-compare and contrast the language of political campaigns during presidential elections in the US (2016) and in Serbia (2017), as well as the local elections in the city of Belgrade (2018). For the purpose of this study we have collected a corpus of selected texts published in US and Serbian daily papers and periodicals from September 2016-March 2018.

The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, to test the initial hypothesis that many overlappings occur in the choice of lexical units and grammatical constructions in both English and Serbian, proving that discriminative rhetoric has become a widely accepted subdiscourse within political discourse across languages and cultures. In addition, we will show that hate-speech as a type of new political subdiscourse has all the features of meta-discourse reflected in a speaker’s or writer’s attempts to guide the receiver’s perception of a text (Hayland, 2005) for the purpose of gaining political power and wealth. Secondly, to investigate pedagogical implications of hate-speech subdiscourse, particularly through the translation perspective in an attempt to disclose teaching techniques and strategies that can be used to train translators to convey morally and ethically problematic (and semantically super-charged) language contents in which language acquires diverse meanings when used in politically and culturally challenging contexts. We provide arguments which show that translators need a strong diverse (socio/cultural)linguistic background for forming a contextual perception of such sensitive language contents and producing effective translations.

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Translation

Of Rocket Men and Loser Terrorists – The role of translation and interpreting in creating the German Trump

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With the rise of Donald Trump, the debate around Brexit, and nationalist and xenophobic parties moving from the margins to the mainstream, the reporting of political debate in the mainstream media provides rich data on the ideological issues driving such populism and the rhetorical means employed to convey populist messages. When reporting is carried out across languages, the role translation and interpreting play, particularly in the use of reified lexical labels (see Beaton-Thome 2013), proves increasingly salient. This shift away from consensus politics has attracted the attention of discourse studies from a monolingual or comparative point of view (Wodak & Krzyżanowski 2017), but there has been little research on how populist discourse travels across language borders via the mediation of translators and interpreters.

In mediating such discourse, translators and interpreters are faced with new and challenging argumentation strategies, such as the deliberate subversion of pragmatic norms in the use of intentional impoliteness (Beaton-Thome, under review), and the increased tendency to play to the gallery (see Billig 1995:105ff. on flagging the homeland and homeland deixis), that call into question traditional translation and interpreting ethics and codes of practice.

In this paper, I trace the text trajectories (Blommaert 2005) of key elements in selected speeches by Donald Trump and examine the role of translation and interpreting in the reception and reporting of these speeches in selected English and German-language media. The focus of analysis is not exclusively on official translations and interpretations but also on the textual traces of the “struggle over the sign” (Gardiner 1992: 7) found in (1) ad-hoc translations in headlines or the body of the printed article, or voice-over during video reports, (2) debates on lexical choice in the comment sections of various media, (3) interpreter and translator meta-discourse about translation choices.

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Rather than perceiving populism as a response to various kinds of democratic crises, recent scholarship increasingly conceptualizes ‘crisis’ as constitutive to performing populism. Across the globe, successful performance and propagation of crisis often requires measures hitherto deemed ‘unconventional’ in the political sphere. ‘Bad manners’ - often conveyed through vulgarly vernacular register of language - have been suggested as ‘the populist style’ of narrating crisis sentiment in a manner that both forces and coaxes salient media coverage.

Focusing on this performative aspect of crisis propagation, this paper examines a particularly mediatized populist speech act we refer to as the “Shithole country controversy” of January 11, 2018. We analyze how transnational hybrid media space domesticates President Trump’s emotional and incredulous narrative on immigration from developing countries into an array of spectacular news events for local audiences. Endeavors to translate the vernacular essence of “the shithole controversy” from the vehicular lingua franca – as Serbian vukojebina (“the place where wolves copulate”) or as Taiwanese 鳥不生蛋的國家 (“the country where birds don’t lay eggs”) – underlines the crucial role of the staged vulgarity, through which the crisis is performed into the realm of banal entertainment.

We first illustrate and typify domesticated recontextualizations of the ‘shithole countries’ news coverage in hybrid media, collecting data from three mainstream news outlets (Wall Street Journal, Le Figaro and Helsingin Sanomat) and three countermedia outlets (Breitbart News, Dreuz.info and MV-lehti). The data consists of 2-3 articles per news outlet and the related discussions, covering the period from 11 January to 18 January 2018. Employing the methodology of frame analysis, we then analyze the differences in how the original populist crisis performance is being domesticated and recontextualized – comparing the process both transnationally and between different forms of media. We conclude by discussing the extent to which collective produsage of online reinformation, the logic of media populism, and staging populist crisis performance can address and explain the findings on convergence and divergence of domesticated and recontextualized discursive frames.
Metaphor, slogans and rhetoric II

Linguistic properties of propaganda

Ansie Maritz

The main aim of this study is to determine whether there are linguistic features in propaganda which can be claimed as linguistic properties that characterise propaganda. Previous linguistic studies used discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis to identify linguistic properties of propaganda with the consequence that no control group of texts with a set of criteria that is not typically associated with propaganda texts is used to test whether the identified linguistic features are truly properties of propaganda. Non-linguistic studies of propaganda, on the other hand, mention linguistic properties of propaganda without referring to linguistic studies. The result may be that linguistic properties identified as characteristic of propaganda may be shared with other forms of communication, and are therefore not strictly speaking characteristic of this text type.

To counter the possibility of circular reasoning, a selection of mainly media texts pertaining populist South African leader President Zuma in the Nkandla and Gupta-Bell Pottinger cases are classified individually as propaganda or non-propaganda with a non-linguistic propaganda classification model drawing on content analysis and conceptual tools from narratology. A linguistic textual analysis is then performed by testing whether the linguistic properties already ascribed to propaganda in the literature are indeed characteristic properties of propaganda. The analysis is therefore different from a standard discourse or critical discourse analysis as the texts are first sorted as propaganda or non-propaganda with regards to their content and by using a control group of texts.

The analysis will be illustrated by referring to eight texts representative of the propaganda and non-propaganda text groups. After these texts were sorted according to their content, the linguistic analysis was carried out on both groups. A broad conclusion entails that the identification process and the linguistic properties of propaganda need to be redefined on a more specific and detailed level.

Key words: propaganda, linguistics, language, discourse analysis, pragmatics
Metaphor, slogans and rhetoric II

*Populist rhetoric as appeals to cultural presuppositions*

M. Reijven

One of the central features of populist rhetoric is that it is not rational argumentation, but an appeal to the people. A way in which politicians can do this, is by calling upon ideas which are readily accepted as valid by the audience. In this project, I analyze how politicians employ such beliefs -- cultural presuppositions -- in their argumentation to make their standpoint more acceptable. Generally, argumentation, like all communication, can be understood because it is part of a cultural discourse which is meaningful to its participants. Cultural Discourse Analysts (e.g. Carbaugh, 2007) note that there are cultural presuppositions underlying communication, depending on the speech community to which the interactants belong. Thus, when advancing political communication, one must understand the relevant identities, relationships, actions, feelings and environment. For example, in a democracy one must presume that it is important for politicians to have the support of the people. However, these assumptions are seen as commonsensical within the cultural context, and are rarely made explicit. Whenever a politician makes a direct appeal to those cultural values in order to improve the acceptability of their argumentation, the argument can be said to be a cultural argument. Donald Trump, during the American presidential elections, made such an appeal, for instance, during one of his visits to The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon. After arguing in defense of his proposed Muslim Travel Ban, he added: “and, I guess, a lot of people agree with me”. Thus, in order to make the argument rhetorically stronger, Trump appealed to the democratic presupposition that people vote for the candidate which they believe has the best ideas. Yet, this claim is generally spoken fallacious: it is an appeal ad populum. Such argumentation, I argue, is central to populist discourse. It does not, however, have to be fallacious.

**Keywords:** populist discourse; argumentation; cultural discourse analysis

**Reference:**

Metaphor, slogans and rhetoric II

The angry citizen and the role of pathos in populist rhetoric

Maria Stopfner

Besides logos, i.e. good reasoning, and ethos, i.e. the reputation of the speaker, pathos, i.e. “putting the hearer in a certain frame of mind”, is one of the three basic modes of persuasion in classical rhetoric (Aristotle Rhet. 1356a). In this context, Wodak (2015) stresses the importance of fear for right-wing populist discourse, however, even though there is no denying that the topos of fear is a persisting feature within far right argumentation (a.o. van Dijk 1987, Wodak et al. 1990, Reisigl/Wodak 2001), the basic emotion that seems to have guided recent elections is anger. Yet, what are the rhetoric means by which populist politicians (Hartleb 2011) are able to stir and subsequently make use of anger in the audience?


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