Visual Manifestations of Populism

On Political Party Websites

By

Mariia Altergot

*Submitted to*

*Central European University*

*School of Public Policy*

*in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Policy*

Supervisor: Cameran Ashraf, Ph.D.

Budapest, Hungary

2018

## Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned **Mariia Altergot** hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non – degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revision.

Date: June 15, 2018

Name (printed letters): Mariia Altergot

Signature:

# Abstract

This study explores the patterns of visual organization on the home pages of populist political parties' websites. Existing research has established the distinctiveness of populist communication and the importance of the Internet for its success. Nevertheless, self-representation of populist actors online remains under-researched, especially concerning their party websites, which continue to be core platforms of political parties' online presence. Guided by the evidence of the exceptional communicative power of visuals, this study explores the differences and similarities of the visual appeals of populist and non-populist party websites.

It identifies that, despite the theoretically grounded expectations, populist communicative tactics do not translate into the visual organization of party websites, and parties from both populist and non-populist categories follow similar patterns in organizing their pages. This study concludes that party websites present a missed opportunity for party branding. However, for mainstream actors, seeking a flashy and memorable visual brand might mean embracing populism as a new norm of political communication.

# Table of Contents

# List of Figures

## Introduction

During the last several years, populism has become an influential and thus extensively researched political force in the Western world. What makes this phenomenon thought-provoking is how complex and multi-faceted it is: there is no single definition of what constitutes populism, and the very nature of it is debated (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Galito 2017; Freeden 1996). Most scholars, however, agree that at the core of populism is an ideological standpoint centered on the people and directed against the elites, and that its major characteristic is a distinctive, simplistic and emotional, mode of political communication (Mudde 2004; Taggart 2004; Albertazzi and McDonnel 2008).

Populism proliferates online: its emotionality, simplified narratives, and the emphasis on direct connection to the people fit very well with the unmediated and unregulated online environments (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Kramer 2017). Out of the many online platforms where populist actors are present, party websites are some of the most compelling for analysis. Despite the advancement of social media, websites remain core to the Internet presence of a political party (Schweitzer 2011; Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015), and are direct reflections of a party's self-presentation online. Unlike social media channels, where individual pages are for the most part the same in structure and design, party websites are created from scratch, and can be modified in accordance with their creators' communicative preferences (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015).

In view of the present-day rise of populism in Europe, and the interconnectedness of populist politics and the Internet, studying populist self-representation online becomes necessary to fully understand such political actors' communicative strategies and appeals. Populism is commonly recognized as a threat to liberal democratic order (Galito 2017), and a comprehensive understanding of its appeal is crucial to prevent its continuous rise in the future. Contributing to

this understanding is the primary goal of this study. Furthermore, the relevance of analyzing political parties' online presence is broader: in the age of social networks, some scholars argue that the role of a party website is declining (Campbell and Lee 2016). Yet, party websites continue to exist, and, as others assert, remain vital for the party's online activities (Schweitzer 2011; Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015; Naseer and Mahmood 2016). The role of a party website in today's politics remains disputed, and calls for a continuous inquiry.

At the focus of this study is the question of how populist political parties, with their distinctive communication style, present and brand themselves through party websites. Focusing on the most successful populist parties in Europe – one of those world regions where populism is now on the rise (Boros et al. 2017; Kramer 2017; Taggart 2004) – it specifically investigates the extent to which populist party websites are dominated by visual information, as compared to their non-populist counterparts from the same countries. Visual elements play a major role in creating and sustaining online identities and organizational brands, and can be extremely powerful emotive and rhetorical devices (Lundgren and Ljuslinder 2011; Richardson and Colombo 2013). Because of that, this study investigates how the visual organization of party websites' home pages aids the creation of a distinctly communicated, "populist" political brand. Based on the findings of previous research, it hypothesizes that populist parties employ visuals in their online communications more frequently than non-populist: emotive and easy to understand (Lundgren and Ljuslinder 2011), visual information can effectively present the party personality as anti-elitist and people-centrist.

Chapter 1 of the present study provides an overview of populism as a concept and its distinctive communicative characteristics, with a focus on online communication and the link between populism, the Internet, and visual communications. It considers the role of party websites in online

political expression and party branding, and draws on the research of visual communication to demonstrate the importance of visual appeals online.

Chapter 2 introduces a theoretical framework for the analysis of visuals on websites, and presents the research question, hypotheses, and methodology of this study. Chapter 3 discusses the findings – including both those concerning the primary question of visual manifestations of populism on party websites, and the initially unexpected observations regarding the visual design of party websites overall. It then discusses this study's limitations, and lays out the avenues for continued research.

# Chapter 1.
# Theory and Literature Review

**The Complex Phenomenon of Populism**

Modern-day populism stems from the anti-elitist protest and mass mobilization movements of the late 18th and 19th century in the United States, Canada, Latin America, Russia, and Africa (Taggart 2004; Eiermann 2016). In Europe, it gathered momentum during the post-war period against the backdrop of the elite-led European integration project (Taggart 2004). It was first recognized as a political phenomenon in the late 1960s, and was primarily associated with Marxism and the theory of modernization up until the 1980s (Galito 2018). Following that, the concept somewhat lost its practical applicability throughout the 1990s, when it was mainly approached from the theoretical perspective, but gained new momentum in the next two decades (Galito 2018), and, during the last several years, came back as an established and influential political force in the Western world (Kramer 2017). The recent political advancements have spurred research of populism, specifically concerning the nature of this phenomenon and its place in the broader political environment (Albertazzi and McDonnel 2008; Jansen 2011; Boyte 2012), the reasons for its emergence and its effects, (Taggart 2004; Parvu 2015), and its communicative tactics and appeals (Spruyt, Keppens and Van Droogenbroeck 2016; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Kramer 2017).

Central to the research of populism is the very question of what populism *is*. One of the most commonly used definitions of this phenomenon was introduced by Danielle Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell: "an ideology that puts a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity, and voice" (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008 as cited in Boyte 2012, 173). Another well-recognized definition of populism is that of

4

Mudde (2004): "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2004, 543).

For its focus on a small number of constitutive concepts (s.a. anti-elitism and exclusion) and its failure to introduce own definitions for major political ideas (s.a. liberty or equality), populism has frequently been described as a "thin" ideology, which is often coupled with different other ideologies from both sides of the political spectrum – for example, nationalism, socialism, or Green politics (Freeden 1996; Kramer 2017; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017). The ideological thinness makes it difficult to pinpoint what exactly the populist ideology stands for, and raises the question of whether populism is an ideology at all. Mudde (2004) touched upon that question, explaining that there are two dominant interpretations of populism: that of a "highly emotional and simplistic discourse that is directed at the 'gut feelings' of the people" (Mudde 2004, 542), and that of an opportunistic policy course aimed at immediately pleasing the voters to get their support (Mudde 2004). In line with that explanation, scholars have argued that the phenomenon of populism can be better understood if approached not as an ideology, but as a communication style or a political strategy. While the study of the populist ideology focuses on the contents and ideas of populist political messages, research of it as a communicative style addresses how these messages are communicated rhetorically, and as political strategy – how they are used to mobilize the electorate (Galito 2018; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017).

Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson (2017), acknowledging that the three interpretations of populism – ideology, style, and strategy – are different aspects of the same phenomenon, introduced a more comprehensive way of approaching populism with the concept of the "populist communication

5

logic." Inspired by the idea of media logic – "the process through which media transmit and communicate information" (Altheide 2013, 225) – the populist communication logic is "the sum of norms, routines, and procedures shaping populist communication" (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017, 1280). The current study, too, discusses populism from the perspective of the populist communication logic, and treats the distinct populist ideology, communication style, and strategy as different and necessary elements of the same phenomenon.

As a backbone for understanding the populist communication logic, Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson (2017) introduced a model of populist ideology, comprised of five elements: sovereignty, populist actors, elite actors, the people, and the others (Figure 1). The model is built around the idea of sovereignty, and of the struggle over it among the four actors. From that perspective, the people are
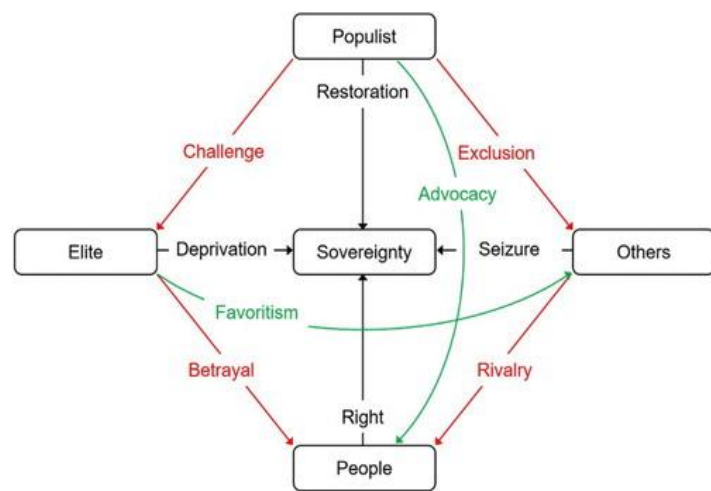


*Figure 1:"Heuristic Model of Populist Ideology."* *Source: Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson (2017), "Populist Online Communication: Introduction to the Special Issue," 1281.*

entitled to the political sovereignty, but the elites control it, betraying the people. At the same time, the others attempt to illegitimately seize the sovereignty in rivalry with the people, and are supported by the elites. The populists' role in this model is to restore the justice of the political order: bring the elites down, return the sovereignty to the people, and exclude the others from the society (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017).

While literature differs on the extent to which all five of the elements from this model are vital to the populist ideology, the broad consensus is that "the people" is a necessary and most important

part of it (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Taggart 2004; Mudde 2004; Canovan 1999). Because it is always the people that populist actors represent and speak to, the populist communication logic appeals to the "common sense" of the ordinary people (Canovan 1999, 5), and is driven by three people-centric traits: *reduced complexity, emotional appeals,* and *negative appeals* (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017). This style of communication simplifies the complex political reality, evokes the emotional response of the electorate (mainly negative, s.a. fear and resentment), and creates the threat of an existential crisis, posed by the others and the elites (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017). The emotional component specifically is key to populist communication: it "creates a parallel reality, based on exaggerations and exacerbated emotions that infantilise and confuse the reader in order to influence their deliberation; not due to experience and logical reasoning, but to impulsiveness, instinct, pathological fear or chimera capable of reaching the impossible" (Galito 2018, 62).

## Populist Communication Online

The populist communication logic becomes extremely effective in the context of the Internet: as will be explained in detail below, unmediated online platforms present unique opportunities for direct connections between the party and its electorate (Kramer 2017; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017). Nevertheless, populist practices online remain largely under-researched (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Kramer 2017), whereas the relationship between populism and the traditional media has been studied from a variety of perspectives. On the one hand, media populism is approached narrowly: as a style of communication exercised by those outlets which adopt populist communication tactics by tailoring their coverage to existing attitudes of the audience and appealing to the readers' shared identity (Kramer 2014). On the other hand, populism in the media has been studied in a broader sense, analyzing how media outlets cover populism and populist

7

actors, and what effects that coverage has on the audience's perceptions of them (Akkerman 2011; Bos and Brants 2014).

Much less attention has been paid to "anti-media populism" – the rejection of and hostility towards traditional media outlets by populist actors – which proliferates on online platforms (Kramer 2017). While the studies of the Internet's political role mainly addressed the Internet's democratizing power (s.a. the Occupy Wall Street movement) and the "deviant Internet of hackers and mischief-makers" (Schroeder 2018, 60), the role of illiberal but mainstream political forces online remains under-researched (Schroeder 2018). This gap includes the online efforts of populist actors, and the communicative tactics they employ on the gatekeeper-free, unmediated platforms of the Internet.

Some of those studies which did explore populist communication online addressed the self-representation of populist actors on the Internet (Groshek and Engelbert 2012), their usage of social media channels (Van Kessel and Castelein 2016; Engesser et al. 2016; Salgado 2018), and the contextual specificities of populist communication in different digital media systems and countries (Schroeder 2018; Groshek and Engelbert 2012; Tai 2015). Such studies have established the vital role that online communication plays for populism: the Internet can amplify populist voices, grant them with legitimacy, help mobilize supporters, and alienate the outgroups (Albertazzi and McDonnel 2008; Abts and Rummens 2007; Salgado 2018).

To explain the complex benefits of the Internet for populist actors, Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson (2017) introduced the concept of "online opportunity structures." These structures are the social contexts of the Internet, similar to the political opportunity structures (the context of the political system) and the discursive opportunity structures (the context of the public sphere), which determine the success of a certain political action (Koopmans and Olzak 2004 as cited in Engesser,

8

Fawzi and Larsson 2017, 1280). Several characteristics of online opportunity structures favor the populist ideology, communicative style, and political strategy – in other words, all aspects of the populist communication logic: directness of online connections, cultivation of like-minded communities, and the supposed democratizing potential of online platforms (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017).

Because the populist communication logic rests first and foremost on anti-elitism and people-centrism, the most important of these characteristics are the direct online connections. They allow populist actors to surpass the traditional media gatekeepers and speak directly to the audience. This directness also makes communications more personal, benefiting the appeals of charismatic leaders, who are often at the forefront of populist parties (Engesser, Fawzi and Larssen 2017). Secondly, the Internet cultivates homophily – "'the tendency of similar individuals to form ties with each other," (Colleoni, Rozza and Arvidsson 2014 as cited in Engesser, Fawzi and Larssen 2017, 1284) creating echo chambers and filter bubbles (Pariser 2011), and reinforcing the in-group favoritism and outgroup derogation dynamic, core to the populist ideology (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017).

Finally, a very useful characteristic of the Internet is that it is commonly viewed as a democratizing platform (Diamond 2010). Kramer (2017) argued that for populists, the online platform itself becomes a meta-message. Free from any outside criticism or social control, it surpasses the elitist political structures, which the populists oppose, creates alternative spaces for non-elitist political expression, and gives weight to the populist claim for restoring the proper democratic order (Kramer 2017; Engesser, Fawzi and Larssen 2017). Furthermore, online platforms allow the electorate to "self-socialize into a populist worldview," and help populism transform from a thin and fragmented ideology into a fully-fledged political identity (Kramer 2017).

**Party Websites and Online Party Branding**

While populist actors particularly benefit from online communications because of the nature of the populist communication logic, the Internet today is widely used by all political actors. Political communication online takes many forms: through websites, social media channels, blogs, and microblogs (Folstad, Johannessen and Luders 2016). Out of all such platforms for political expression, party websites present a unique opportunity for studying the online presence and communicative behavior of a party.

Websites serve as unmediated communication platforms, provide large amounts of material for analysis and research, and create tools for dialogue among the party supporters (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015; Folstad, Johannessen and Luders 2016). Despite the advancement of social media, which allows for interactive communication with the voters, party websites, with their top-down approach to information provision, remain the most prominent platforms of online party presence in Europe (Schweitzer 2011), and have been described as "an increasingly common source of information for voters" (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015, 200). Research has approached party websites from the perspectives of their features and informative value (Lilleker et al. 2011; Gibson et al. 2012), role in the political life and electoral campaigning (Schweitzer 2011; Norris 2003; Naseer and Mahmood 2016), and user experience (Folstad, Johannessen and Luders 2016). Primarily because websites are under the direct control of the party, they have also been studied in relation to how parties communicate what they stand for, or their political brands (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015).

Political brands are based on information symbols, s.a. logotypes, slogans, and colors (Scammel 2014), and the overall perceptions of a political organization or individual (Lees-Marshment 2001). Although the application of marketing strategies to politics has been criticized for limiting the agenda, demanding conformity of behavior, and increasing confrontation among actors, branding today is an integral part of political communication (French and Smith 2009), and brands have been labeled "the key communicative tools of contemporary politics" (Cosgrove 2012 as cited in Campbell and Lee 2016, 49).

Research has demonstrated the power of political brands to influence the electoral and policy-making success. Strong political brands – those with large numbers of specific, recognizable, and favorable associations in the minds of the electorate – have a significant potential to shape the voting behavior and election results (Nielsen and Larsen 2014). It has also been demonstrated that the opposite happens when political brands dilute: the pursuit of actions and policies inconsistent with an established party brand is linked to the demise of party support and erosion of its electoral base (Lupu 2014). Political branding has been identified also as an integral part of policy success: if done effectively, it can increase the visibility and raise the profile of a policy action on the public agenda (Ogden, Walt and Lush 2003), and contribute to its positive evaluation and perceived trustworthiness by the citizens (Karens et al. 2015). Such findings point at the power of brands to shape policies and politics, and demonstrate the importance of political branding for effective political communication.

While political branding has gathered momentum with the advancement of social media for its potential to mobilize new voters (Campbell and Lee 2016), it remains a part of appealing to the already existing support base – which includes the audiences of party websites, primarily comprised of the established party voters and politically engaged citizens (Folstad, Johannessen

11

and Luders 2016; Norris 2003). Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice (2015) identified that parties distinctly express their brand personalities – "the sets of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker 1997, 347) – through text on party websites. Their study employed Aaker's (1997) framework for brand personality dimensions, which comprises five traits that can be communicated by brands: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness (Aaker 1997). While this framework was developed primarily for the analysis of commercial brands, Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice (2015) successfully applied it to political brands, and found that all five of the UK parties they analyzed distinctly communicated different dimensions of brand personality in texts of the websites. Out of these parties, the website of UKIP was particularly distinctive for its strong communication of sincerity and excitement (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015).

Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice's (2015) findings about sincerity and excitement as the leading traits expressed via text by the brand of UKIP are very much in line with Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson's (2017) conclusions on the populist communication logic. As a populist party ("The Populism Graph"), UKIP aims to simplify, personify, and load the messaging with emotions; communicating sincerity and excitement helps to transmit that. According to Aaker's (1997) framework, sincerity as a brand personality dimension is associated with the following traits: down-to-earth, honest, wholesome, and cheerful (Aaker 1997). Being down-to-earth and honest are some of the major assertions that the populists make when they claim to represent the people; communicating sincerity speaks directly to these assertions. It helps to make the message more personal, honest, and straightforward. Excitement, meanwhile, is associated with being daring, imaginative, and up-to-date. Populists position themselves as the challengers of the system and the visionaries of the proper democratic order, and self-presenting as daring helps to uphold this image. Furthermore,

12

strong emotions, especially negative emotions, are core to populist communication (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Caiani and Graziano 2016), what also explains the emphasis on communicating excitement.

Meanwhile, marketing research points out that brand perceptions are shaped not only by the textual information presented on the website, but also its design and visual organization. For example, human images, and in particular those portraying facial features, demonstrably make a website seem more appealing and socially engaged (Cyr et al. 2009), and add to its initial perceived trust (Karimov et al. 2011); color schemes, too, significantly contribute to the perceived trustworthiness of the website (Cyr et al. 2010); and structure and design of websites can influence the perceived quality of products presented on them, affecting the purchasing decisions of consumers (Wells, Valacich and Hess 2011).

Research of how website design contributes to online branding has also been done in relation to the organization of online newspapers. Knox (2007) found that English-language online newspapers are moving towards a distinct style in organizing their home pages, which surpasses cultural barriers. They seek to establish credibility by visually resembling their print counterparts, and adopt traditional-looking page layout through shapes, vectors, and visual elements (Knox 2007). Knox (2017) argued for the need to develop a systematic methodology for the analysis of web pages' design: the "visual demands" of the computer screen now have to accommodate the verbal discourse of communicators, shaping and transforming the presentation of information (Knox 2017, 23). While these findings primarily concern e-commerce and do not necessarily directly translate into the settings of political marketing and branding, they clearly indicate that visual elements of websites shape brand perceptions. They thus can be used in creating and

sustaining political brand personalities, and indirectly contribute to the electoral and policy success of a given political actor.

**Communicative Power of Visual Elements**

Research of visual communication finds strong support and explanation for the identified capacity of visual elements of website design to shape the perceptions of a political brand. In communication, visuals serve two major functions: referential, pointing back at the contents of the accompanying text, and emotive, which adds an emotional value to the message (Hillesund 1994 as cited in Lundgren and Ljuslinder 2011). The latter, emotive function of visuals, is what makes them particularly effective tools of communication: they not only support the accompanying verbal arguments, but become rhetoric devices in themselves. Multiple scholars have pointed out that effective arguments can be made visually (Richardson and Wodak 2009; Richardson and Colombo 2013; Blair 2012), especially when it comes to political persuasion and propaganda (Richardson and Colombo 2013; Cheles 2010; Campbell and Lee 2016). While the meanings and standpoints advanced by visuals can be viewed as ambiguous and implicit – which is why some scholars continue to deny the possibility of such arguments – ambiguity is inherent to political communication as such, and context sensitivity is as important for verbal argumentation as it is for visual (Richardson and Wodak 2009; Blair 2012). Furthermore, its emotive capacity makes visual argumentation ever more comprehensive than verbal, as it triggers responses on both cognitive and emotional, and both rational and irrational levels (Richardson and Wodak 2009).

Visuals can significantly increase the electorate's familiarity with political issues and parties, and visual knowledge is indicative of the civil competence at least as much as verbal knowledge

14

(Campbell and Lee 2016; Prior 2013). Because of that, multiple types of visual information are key to political communication and campaigning:

> "party logos and 'brand identity', photographs of party members, the people and places surrounding party leaders when they are filmed and photographed (involving the choreographing of public events), or the multi-modal design of printed party materials (including layout, font, consistent use of colour, framing and perspectivisation, etc.), amongst many other genres and public discourses" (Richardson and Colombo 2013, 187).

In the online realm, it is the visual elements of party websites that perform this rhetorical function: photographs, videos, and animations make the website more engaging, and contribute to the persuasiveness of its contents (Lilleker et al. 2011).

For populist communication, visual arguments can be especially effective. Studies have explored the role of visuals in populist communication performed by political actors in advertising and propaganda (Schmuck and Matthes 2017; Richardson and Colombo 2013; Richardson and Wodak 2008), as well as by media outlets in the representation of news through populist-like reporting (Lundgren and Ljuslinder 2011). Visuals are so prominent in populist communication because, while populism is driven by simplified and emotional appeals, out of all modes of information it is the visual that works best at creating easy to understand, memorable, and, most importantly, emotionally evocative messages (Hutchinson and Bradley 2009; Fahmy and Wanta 2007).

Compared to verbal, textual, or aural information, visual possesses the largest capacity to be understood and remembered (Hutchinson and Bradley 2009; Grabe and Bucy 2009; Brantner, Lobinger and Wetzstein 2009). Visuals are first to catch the attention of the audience, and they

15

direct the interpretations of everything else presented alongside (Lind 1994 as cited in Lundgren and Ljuslinder 2011). When accompanied by other types of information, visual becomes the most salient and overshadows everything else, what is known as the "picture-superiority effect" (Brantner, Lobinger and Wetzstein 2009, 526). Finally, visuals are extremely powerful at triggering the emotional response from the viewers (Fahmy and Wanta 2007; Parry 2010), and can serve as evidence to add legitimacy to political actors and their actions (Ali, James and Vultee, 2013). All that works in favor of the simplistic populist "Us VS. Them" discourses, and those aspects of the visual argumentation that tap into the irrational, emotional, and unreasonable are often intentional rhetorical choices of populist communicators (Richardson and Wodak 2009).

Given that the Internet is a crucial tool of populist communication, and that political parties, and more so than others – populists, communicate their brand personalities through the textual elements of party websites (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015), the review of literature opens up the question of whether populists employ website visuals to the same end, and whether similarly self-presenting parties adopt similar web-design grammar. This question becomes particularly thought-provoking in relation to the distinct communicative style and logic of populist political actors, which is arguably transforming into a complete political identity (Kramer 2017). The present study seeks to answer it.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

**Theoretical Framework**

Online, visual arguments acquire new meanings, shaped by the uniqueness of the website as a medium of communication. On websites, visual information actively interacts with verbal, making communication multimodal: visually appealing design is a necessary component in the representation of textual information online. What makes websites unique is that the information on them is continuously updated and highly interactive; other multimodal mediums, s.a. books, newspapers, or television, do not have the same degree of fluidity. Because of that, the process of meaning-making on websites is exercised through the combination of visual and verbal cues, and is continuously changing (Knox 2017; Lemke 1999). Research has analyzed the functions of visual information in multimodal, or visual-verbal communication, on mediums such as newspapers, books, and websites (Kress and van Leeuwen 1996; Lemke 1999; Martinec and Salway 2005; Knox 2017).

In multimodal settings, visual and verbal information do not stand on their own, but interact and shape the audience's interpretations of each other. Considered from that perspective, visual meaning-making is not limited to purely visual items s.a. photographs, but is an integral part of understanding also the verbal information: for example, the visual elements of a website design serve to frame and organize its verbal contents (Knox 2017). As summarized by Knox (2017), visual information in multimodal settings can serve three generalized purposes: (1) *interpersonal*, to construct a relationship between the producer and the audience; (2) *representational*, to portray the contents "the way things are"; and (3) *organizational*, to combine the first two purposes and arrange the information through framing and salience in order of relative importance (Knox 2017, 22).

The *interpersonal* meaning created by websites' appearances serves to establish the authority of the website's authors, and create a connection between them and their audiences. Knox (2017) describes how the shape and organization of elements on a web page, as well the color schemes which dominate it, can create interpersonal meanings: for example, angular elements and black-on-white color schemes can increase the perceived credibility of a source (Knox 2017, 30-31).

The *representational* meanings present "the way things are," and describe the reality as it is perceived by the communicator. Knox (2017) distinguishes two ways in which representational meanings are constructed on web pages visually: visual classification and visual illustration. Visual classification refers to the organization of a web page, where items of the same size and shape are presented together, thus becoming covertly connected to each other. On online newspaper pages, for example, this is the case with newsbites – single-sentence news stories' previews – which, when displayed in clusters, enter a taxonomous relationship. Such a relationship would be the distinction between "hard news" and "light news," which differ in their relative perceived importance. The second major way of creating representational meanings concerns visual illustrations – images which accompany textual information and contribute to the representational value created by text (Knox 2017, 31-36).

The *organizational* meanings created by websites' appearances are similar to visual classification, and serve to orient the audience to the relative importance of different elements through framing and salience. Framing in the website design can be exercised via visual borders or empty spaces; salience – via visual weight assigned to different elements (for example, through font or colors) (Knox 2017).

**Research Question**

Research of populist communications has focused on the relationship between populism and the traditional media, but the ways in which populism manifests itself online remain largely under-researched (Schroeder 2018; Kramer 2014). It has been established that websites continue to be a major part of the European political parties' online presence (Schweitzer 2011) and can effectively contribute to the creation of political brands (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015). In view of such findings, recognizing that the Internet plays a crucial role for the success of populist communication (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Schroeder 2018), this study investigates how the populist ideology and style of communication shape the online self-representation of populist actors on their party websites.

Based on the demonstrated exceptional power of the visual information to move audiences through emotions and associations (Hutchinson and Bradley 2009; Fahmy and Wanta 2007), this study primarily concerns the comparative prominence of visual elements on populist and non-populist party websites. It analyzes *how the populist communicative styles and ideological appeals translate into the online party representation through the coordination of textual and visual elements on home pages, and the overall visual impressions that the website creates*. At the center of this analysis is Europe – one of those regions of the world where populism is currently on the rise (Boros et al. 2017; Kramer 2017), and where the relatedness of political landscapes allows for a feasible comparative analysis ("About Populism Tracker").

Specifically, this study considers the prominence of those visuals which serve a *representational* meaning-creating function, according to the classification of Knox (2017). Portraying the world as it is seen by communicators, *representational* imagery argues visually, and directly aids the creation of political narratives (Knox 2017, 22). That being said, it should be recognized that the

19

meaning-making visual elements online are not limited to purely visual forms that create *representational* meanings, and the multimodal composites of the website design, too, can guide the audience in understanding the contents through *interpersonal* and *organizational* meanings (Knox 2017). However, as will be discussed in the Methodology section of this chapter, the focus exclusively on those images which help create *representational* and direct meanings was most feasible for the purposes of this study.

**Hypotheses**

This study investigates the following hypotheses:

*H1: The image-to-text ratio on the home pages of populist parties' websites is greater than that on the websites of non-populist parties;*

People-centrism is core to the populist communication logic, and the populist narratives are tailored to be easily understood by the general public to the point of oversimplification, driven by emotions and "the common sense" (Canovan 1999, 5). While, due to the negative connotations around the term "populist," parties would unlikely be willing to openly self-present as such (Galito 2018), according to the populist communication logic, their political brands aim to be people-centric, relatable (easy to understand), and as knowing exactly what is going on with the political reality and how to fix it (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Albertazzi and McDonnel 2008; Canovan 1999). H1 expects that this self-representation is exercised, among other tools, through the extensive use of visual arguments on populist party websites.

As research has demonstrated, we believe what we see: visual information overpowers all else at attracting attention, evoking emotions, and staying in the memory of the audience (Brantner, Lobinger and Wetzstein 2009; Fahmy and Wanta 2007). Because of that, it can be expected that

20

populist communication employs visuals to a greater extent than non-populist – and specifically concerning those visuals which create *representational* meanings, portraying the world "as it is." (Knox 2017, 22). They are the very tools which can help create and sustain alternative political realities, vividly framing the messages in accordance with political narratives, and tapping right into the irrational beliefs and fears of the supporters (Galito 2018; Richardson and Colombo 2013; Richardson and Wodak 2009). Rhetorically aiding individual messages, when presented together on a party website, large amounts of visual information can also help create an *overall impression* of the given website and party as being forward-thinking, easily relatable, and engaging (Lilleker et al. 2011). Such branding would reflect that, according to the populist communication logic, populists present themselves as the visionaries of the proper democratic order, whose role is to restore the justice in society (Mudde 2004; Kramer 2017; Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017).

*H2: The image-to-text ratio on the home pages of non-populist parties' websites is greater than that on the websites of populist parties;*

An alternative hypothesis might hold if populists – in particular, right-wing populists – adopt more traditional-looking identity online to appeal to their conservative electorate. Analyzing online newspaper homepages, Knox (2007) described an emerging grammar of visual design, guiding online newspapers towards traditional looks which resemble the hardcopy press in order to establish credibility and objectivity (Knox 2007, 46-48). The conservative-leaning voters of right-wing populist parties, too, might trust the preserved and traditional looks more than the flashy and hip imagery.

*H0: Party websites do not have a distinct pattern of image-to-text ratio based on whether they belong to populist or non-populist parties.*

This hypothesis carries a checkup function. Because of the distinctive style of populist communication and the demonstrated role of websites – both in looks and in substance – at creating and sustaining political brands, it is unlikely that populist websites are indistinguishable from non-populist. However, as the grammar of visual-verbal online design is only emerging (Knox 2007), and as the populist ideology is still in the process of becoming a fully-fledged identity (Kramer 2017), that is not impossible.

**Methodology**

This study employs content analysis methodology to assess the coordination of verbal and visual elements on the home pages of party websites. The sample consists of a set of most successful populist and non-populist political parties in the EU, and draws on the populist party classification of the online platform The Populism Tracker – a continuously updated, most comprehensive project analyzing the trends of populist politics in the EU ("About Populism Tracker").

For the purposes of this study, 10 most successful populist parties in Europe as of the first quarter of 2018 were selected from The Populism Tracker database (Figure 2). Then, a set of 10 most successful non-populist parties – one for each country represented on the populist set – was selected based on the parties holding the largest seats in their respective parliaments (Parties and Elections in Europe), out of those *not* listed on the Populism Map ("The Populism Map"). Because two of the top 10 populist parties are represented by Hungary, the sample for non-populist parties also includes two Hungarian parties (Figure 2).

Although populist parties are sometimes contraposed to mainstream parties, the parties selected for the second half of this sample cannot be automatically considered "mainstream." Meguid (2005) drew a distinction between mainstream and niche political parties on the basis of issues

salient in the parties' electoral programs. Meguid argued that niche parties introduce new issues outside of the traditional economic orientation of party competition; that these issues often do not match the existing lines of political divisions in the electorate; and that niche parties campaign on a narrower scope of issues than their mainstream counterparts (Meguid 2005, 347-348). While populism understood as an ideology can fit the profile of a niche party, populism seen as a political strategy or communication style lies in a different dimension of party politics comparison. A niche party can be populist in style and strategy, but niche does not automatically mean populist. For that reason, given that this study views populism from the perspective of the populist communication logic, it would be inaccurate to contrapose populist parties to mainstream parties (a definition theoretically coupled with niche parties). Instead, this study considers *non-populist* parties – those successful enough to be notable in their respective political landscapes, but not identified as populist by The Populism Tracker project – without necessarily labeling them as mainstream.

*Figure 2: Dataset*

| Populist Parties | Non-Populist Parties |
|---|---|
| Fidesz (Hungary) | Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP) (Hungary) |
| Law and Justice (Poland) | Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP) (Hungary) |
| ANO 2011 (Czech Republic) | Civic Platform (Poland) |
| Five Star Movement (Italy) | Civic Democratic Party (Czech Republic) |
| Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL) (Cyprus) | Democratic Party (Italy) |
| Estonian Centre Party (Estonia) | Democratic Rally (DISY) (Cyprus) |

| | |
|---|---|
| Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) (Greece) | Estonian Reform Party (Estonia) |
| Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB) (Bulgaria) | New Democracy (Greece) |
| Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) | Bulgarian Socialist Party (Bulgaria) |
| Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) (Hungary) | Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) (Austria) |

Used as the primary source of case selection for this study, The Populism Tracker is a part of a larger online platform The Progressive Post, operated by The Foundation for European Progressive Studies – an independent think tank for progressive European politics ("FEPS & The Progressive Post") – and a research institute Policy Solutions ("About Populism Tracker"). Included in the Tracker is The Populism Graph – a database of populist parties which ranks their popularity in the respective countries based on the most recent national opinion polls – and The Populism Map, which shows all European populist parties and their popularity scores on the map of Europe ("The Populism Graph"; "The Populism Map").

The methodological approach to populism of The Progressive Post is close to the vision of the populist communication logic introduced by Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson (2017), as it considers it a complex phenomenon encompassing at once the ideology, the communication style, and the political strategy. The platform's primary point of departure is ideological and based on Cas Mudde's (2004) definition of populism as a thin-centered ideology which views society ultimately separated into "the people" and "the elites" (Boros et al. 2017, 14). To identify a party as populist, The Progressive Post analyzes the party program and its official messages. In addition to that,

however, the platform also considers the rhetoric employed by party leaders – a factor which potentially more closely relates to populism seen as a communication style than an ideology. Furthermore, the programs, messages, and rhetoric are then considered from the perspective "of their tendency to build upon animosity in society, the use of the "us versus them" dichotomy, the rejection of social and political pluralism, and whether they prefer direct democracy to a representative system" (Boros et al. 2017, 14), which also is not about ideological standpoints as much as it is about the political strategy and style of communication. The final decision of adding the party to the list of populist parties is based on whether the given party meets one or several of these criteria, and whether its popularity in the polls for the preceding year was sufficient. In making these judgements, the platform also considers existing academic categorizations and expert opinions on populism (Boros et al. 2017).

To analyze how the verbal and visual elements are coordinated on the websites, word count and image count were quantified for the home page of each website. For the word count, the entire page was highlighted and copied into a separate document, which then automatically calculated the number of words. This approach, when used with the Chrome browser, allowed to account for all textual elements on the page, including all those which were part of different segments in slideshow sections. Images were counted manually, and their selection was guided by the categories for visual meanings described by Knox (2017). As covered by Knox's *interpersonal, representational*, and *organizational* functions, different visuals serve different roles in aiding the audience at interpreting the contents of a website and connecting with its creators. Recognizing that, however, this study was limited to visual elements serving the *representational* function only. Because of the differences in the organization and design of different websites, the lack of an existing framework for an all-encompassing categorization of visual and visual-verbal web-design

elements, and the time limitations of this study, the focus on the *representational* meanings was most feasible.

The visuals considered here to serve *representational* function included the photographic and non-photographic (computer generated) illustrations presented on the websites' home pages. These included both those which are part of the page layout (i.e. background photographic images) and those constituting individual elements of the page (i.e. thumbnail illustrations), as well as preview images of embedded video clips, all images within animated slideshows' loops, and pictures included in the first screens of embedded social media feeds. The reason why the embedded feeds were limited to the first screen is that they normally continuously update with scrolling and are not fixed, what would skew the data. Logotypes (i.e. of parties, their partners, and social networks), and profile images on embedded social network feeds' posts were not considered, because from the perspective of the three categories described by Knox (2017), these serve an *interpersonal* function, and help establish the presence and "the authority of the voice" of the party (Knox 2017, 23).

Following the coding, ratios between the word and image counts were calculated for each home page (Appendix 1), and analyzed for equal variance via an independent samples t-test. The t-test is used to assess the extent to which two populations are different from each other, and whether the differences between them are significant enough to indicate a certain pattern. Its assessment is based on the populations' means, and works best for small sample sizes ("T-Test"), which is why this test was selected for the purposes of this study. In addition, all home pages were assessed qualitatively.

# Chapter 3. Analysis

**Findings**

Quantitative analysis did not identify significant differences in the visual-verbal organization of populist and non-populist party websites' homepages. The verbal-to-visual ratios for populist party websites ranged between 9.64 (AKEL) and 30.88 (Estonian Centre Party), and for non-populist – between 12.1 (KDNP) and 67.14 (New Democratic Party). Both populist and non-populist sets included outliers with unusually high verbal-to-visual ratios: Five Star Movement from the populist set with a ratio of 151, whose page included very few images, and the Estonian Reform Party from the non-populist set with a ratio of 72.7, with a very high number of words on the home page (Appendix 1). Although seemingly the set for populist websites' ratios ranged lower than that for non-populist, suggesting that the former employed images to a greater extent than the latter, statistical analysis did not identify the two sets as significantly different from each other, either before (Figure 3) or after accounting for the outliers (Figure 4).

*Figure 3: Results of the Independent Samples T-Test (Entire Dataset)*

**Independent Samples T-Test**

| Test | Statistic | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ratio Student | -0.121 | 18.00 | 0.905 |
| Mann-Whitney | 43.000 | | 0.631 |

*Figure 4: Results of the Independent Samples T-Test (Excluding Outliers)*

**Independent Samples T-Test**

| Test | Statistic | df | p |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ratio Student | -1.365 | 16.00 | 0.191 |
| Mann-Whitney | 33.000 | | 0.546 |

Therefore, neither *H1: "The image-to-text ratio on the home pages of populist parties' websites is greater than that on the websites of non-populist parties,"* nor *H2: "The image-to-text ratio on the home pages of non-populist parties' websites is greater than that on the websites of populist parties"* held. Instead, *H0: "Party websites do not have a distinct pattern of image-to-text ratio based on whether they belong to populist or non-populist parties"* was unexpectedly proven.

The qualitative assessment demonstrated that the overall looks and organization of websites across the two sets are very similar. Home pages of most websites for both populist and non-populist parties are organized in very alike ways. At the top of the pages are large colorful images, which take up most of the screen space, and are accompanied by the party name, logo, and navigation bar. Often, these are slideshows, with either automatic or prompted (by click or hover) animations, highlighting key issues or news about the party (Figures 5-8). Beneath the large heading images is usually a news section, which includes what Knox (2007) defined as "newsbites." Described by Knox (2007) in relation to online newspapers, newsbites serve to orient the reader to the contents of the website, highlight the issues its creators deem most important, establish the authority of the authors, and create a connection between them and the readers (Knox 2007, 23-29). Very similar in structure to online newspaper newsbites, the newsbites on the party websites' home pages, too, are composed of a headline, a lead, and an accompanying thumbnail image. They highlight the key news in relation to the party, and can be used to suggest what the party stands for (Figures 9, 10). Very frequently, the newsbites are angular and arranged in the pattern of squared blocks (Figures 5-10).

While, due to the time limitations this study did not include a quantitative analysis of the images' contents, the seemingly overwhelming majority of them across the dataset portray the parties' leading politicians, photographs of the recent events associated with the party (s.a. rallies,

meetings), and, in rarer cases of non-photographic illustrations, schematic representations of the

party program's goals.

*Figure 5: Home Page of the Law and Justice Party Website (first screen).*
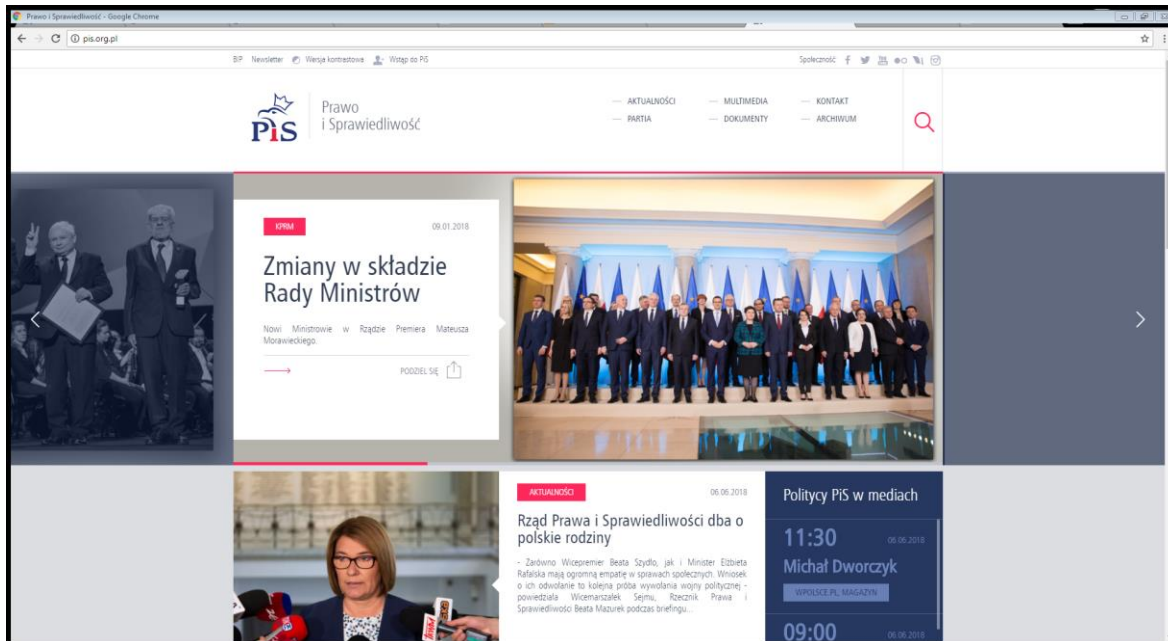*Source: Pis.org.pl. Accessed June 6, 2018.*



*Figure 6: Home Page of the Syriza Party Website (first screen).*
*Source: Syriza.gr. Accessed June 6, 2018.*

*Figure 7: Home Page of the KDNP Party Website (first screen).*
*Source: Kdnp.hu. Accessed June 6, 2018.*



*Figure 8: Home Page of the Civic Platform Party Website (first screen).*
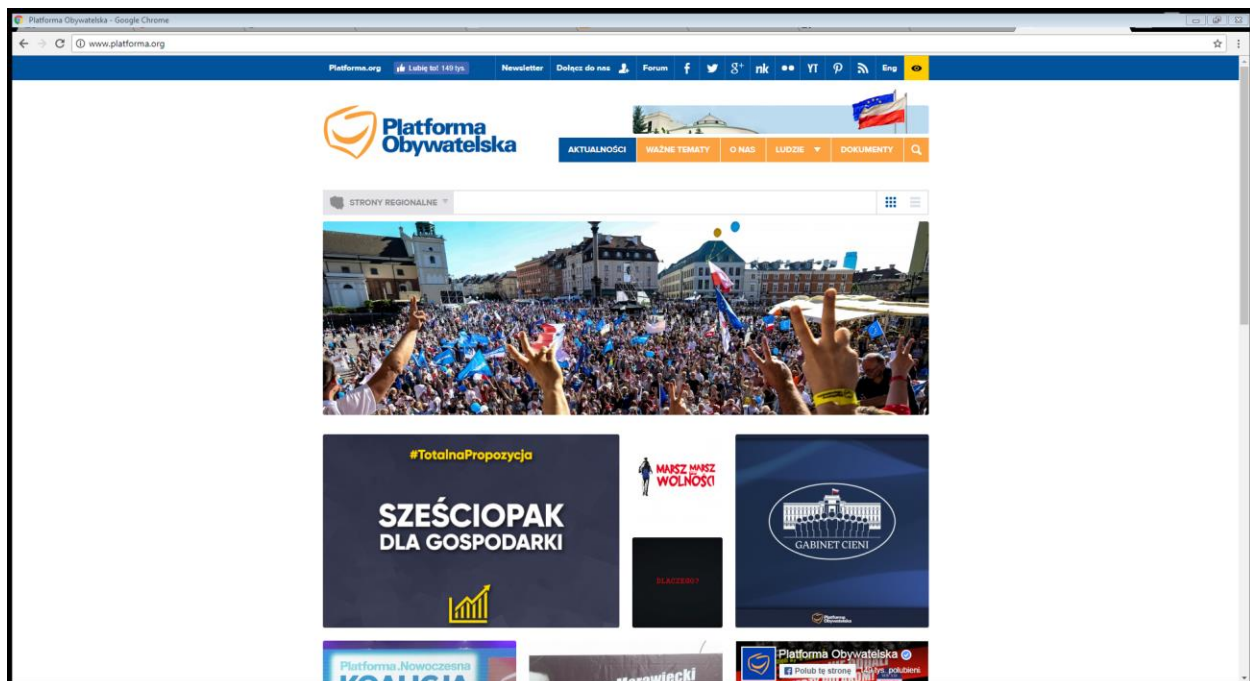*Source: Platforma.org. Accessed June 6, 2018.*

*Figure 9: News Section on the Home Page of the Fidesz Party Website (below first screen).*
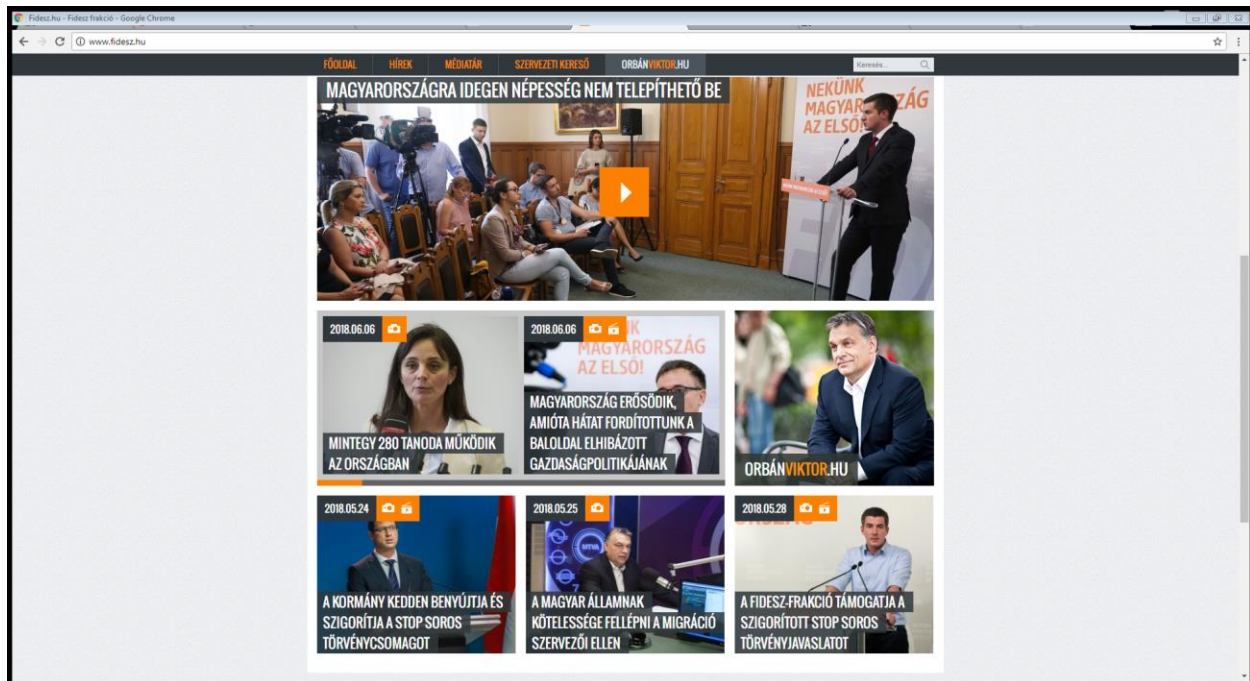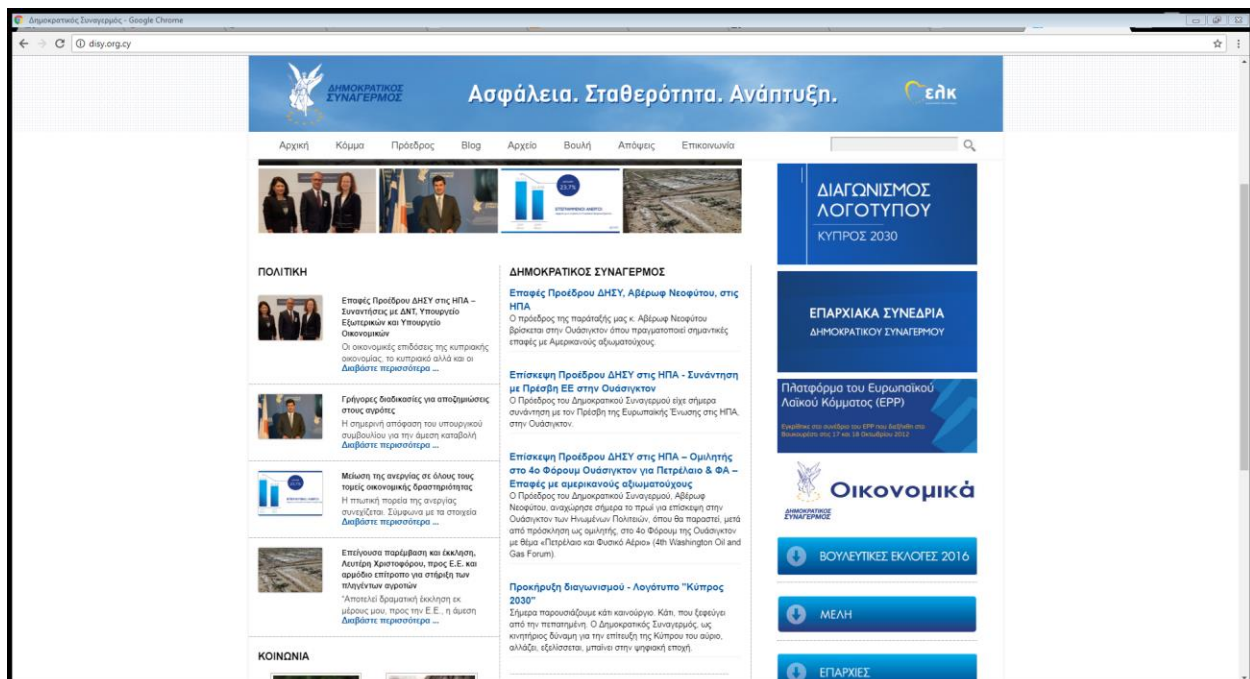*Source: Fidesz.hu. Accessed June 6, 2018.*



*Figure 10: News Section on the Home Page of the DISY Party Website (below first screen).*
*Source: DISY.org.cy. Accessed June 6, 2018.*

Many, but not all, pages include embedded social network feeds. Given the established heavy reliance of populist parties on social media (Kramer 2017), it is rather surprising that almost half of all populist parties considered in this study (Fidesz, Jobbik, GERB, and the Estonian Center Party) *do not* have social media channels embedded on their websites' home pages, and at best only include links to their accounts.

Two notable ways in which some parties do personalize their home pages is through the use of font and color: either those historically associated with the party family, s.a. the red color frequently used by the socialists and leftists like Syriza, MSZP, and Bulgarian Socialist Party, or with the given party in particular – for example, the recognizable orange color, consistently used by the Hungarian Fidesz.

Beyond that, however, the personalizing potential of having an own website is barely explored. Most websites are not memorable and look very similar to each other. Most home pages are organized the exact same way, focusing first and foremost on news segments about the party, headed by a large generic image at the top of the home page. Serving primarily informative purposes, they are not at all engaging, and do little to establish a closer connection between the party and its electorate. *Representational* images, quantified in this study, for the most part feature party politicians and recent events surrounding the party, also exhibiting very little difference from website to website. Overall, the visual design of most analyzed websites strikes as old-fashioned and unengaging.

**Discussion**

The implications of this study's findings are twofold, and indicate at once the lack of distinctive communicative discourses on party websites, and the limited party branding on party websites in general.

*No "Populist-Looking" Website*

On the one hand, the quantitative analysis did not identify significant differences between the visual-verbal organization of the populist and non-populist party websites, and the degree to which these websites' home pages are dominated by *representational* visuals. The populist communicative style, therefore, does not translate into the visual organization of party websites, and the extent of visual appeals in design and layout of home pages is not used to communicate populist political brand identities.

From the dataset analyzed, there appears to be no such thing as a "populist organization of a website home page". This might in part be due to that fact that the term "populist" has a negative connotation in the European political context (Galito 2018), which is why populist parties might be unwilling to brand themselves as people-centric and sensational through websites. Instead, most of both populist and non-populist parties opt for a "typical" design. This might in part be explained by the fact that party websites can serve as primary sources of information not only for the voters, but also, for example, journalists or researchers. For the purposes of official representations, all parties might prefer to uphold the appearances of traditional political entities.

Alternatively, the lack of an identifiable trend for visual-verbal organization between the populist and non-populist parties might be because the populist ideology is thin and arguably evolving (Freeden 1996; Kramer 2017). It is yet to develop a shared grammar of visual-verbal website

design. In other words, each of the analyzed populist websites might be organized as "populist" in its own way.

*Missed Opportunity for Party Branding*

On the other hand, the limited differentiation of website designs speaks of the role that party websites currently play in political branding in general. If even populist political actors, with their distinct style of communication, do not visually distinguish their online self-representation from other parties, it means that the more traditional political communicators – the mainstream and non-populist parties – are even less likely to use distinctive ways of online communication through websites.

The reason why most party websites appear very similar-looking, and why their home pages do not present much value beyond the party-relevant news might be that political parties put less effort into branding themselves to the existing electorate than they do for the potential voters. As identified by research, prime audiences of party websites are those voters who are already politically active, and those who already support the party (Folstad, Johannessen and Luders 2016; Norris 2003). While the major branding and voter attracting efforts online take place on social media channels, which allow parties to target the otherwise unengaged electorate (Campbell and Lee 2016), on websites, which are tailored more for the informational demands of those already engaged in politics, it seems to stop. As Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice (2012) established, parties continue to express their political brand personalities on party websites verbally, but the potential for differentiation through visual appeals is hardly explored.

This homogeneity of website design is problematic. On the one hand, websites can be a unique chance to stand out among the competition and create a memorable online presence to target the

politically engaged voters who seek information on different parties (Folstad, Johannessen and Luders 2016). On the other hand, for those website visitors who already support the party (Norris 2003), continued branding can be as important as it is for the unengaged users of social media. Establishing a distinctive and recognizable party presence on websites can help reinforce and retain the voter support, and strengthen the sense of community and belongingness among the electorate.

Research demonstrates that strong political brands can have significant impact on the election outcomes and policy success, (Nielsen and Larsen 2014; Lupu 2014; Ogden, Walt and Lush 2003) and party websites present a unique opportunity for the creation of a visually memorable political brand. As Nielsen and Larsen (2014) discuss, political brands are based on associative networks – all the different aspects that are in one way or the other connected to the political party in the minds of the electorate. The larger the amount of these associations is, and the more unique, diverse and favorable they are, the stronger and more valuable a political brand is considered. The acquisition of the associative networks, meanwhile, is a passive process; voters are "unmotivated learners" of political brands, and brand associations are primarily based on immediate and intuitive impressions, not on active studying processes (Nielsen and Larsen 2014, 154-155). Because visuals are processed easily and automatically (Lundgren and Ljuslinder 2011), they tap directly into the associative networks of a political brand. An effectively designed party website, therefore, can contribute to the strength of a political brand, and thus indirectly affect the party's success.

The implications of these findings for mainstream actors, however, are not straightforward. While an intuitive conclusion emerging from the discussion above is that parties should use their websites' design more actively, such a recommendation would be ambiguous. Having a potential to improve the online presence of mainstream parties, it would simultaneously imply that populists, too, should adopt even more pronounced communicative tactics. In fact, such a recommendation

would invite all political actors to turn to populist-like communicative techniques: capture the attention with visuals, and tap into the emotional.

Currently, populist parties appear to play by the rules of mainstream in constructing their website identities. If non-populist parties start introducing flashy visual identities in search of a memorable brand, this dynamic might shift, making the populist-like style of communication a new norm. This possibility opens up the questions of where the line between effective visual political branding and populist style of communication lies, and whether in the world of attention economy, political brands, and social networks everyone will (or should) act "populist".

**Limitations**

A major limitation of this study was the challenge of classifying political parties as populist or non-populist. While the classification used here was based on the data of an independent research institute, there remains ambiguity regarding labeling a certain party as one or the other. As Galito (2018) discussed, the identification of populism is nonconsensual and can become a political statement, what makes it very challenging. Furthermore, as discussed in the Chapter 1, this challenge is intensified by the ambiguity of what populism *is*.

Another limitation was that, while quantifying the amount of visual arguments and appeals, this study could not account for the differences in their sizes. While from the qualitative assessment it appeared that most party websites use images of similar sizes, this cannot yet be a definitive conclusion. Furthermore, this study did not account for those textual elements which constituted parts of visuals: for example, some of the digital banners included non-interactive textual elements. Due to the time constraints, in such cases, only the visual element was accounted for; textual elements were restricted to those automatically quantifiable.

Finally, focusing on the extent of visual appeals and argumentation, this study only considered the *representational* images, not accounting for the visuals of other types which are part of the website design. Meanwhile, as identified by previous research (Knox 2017) visuals of *interpersonal* and *organizational* nature, too, can significantly contribute to the overall appearance of and impression from a website.

**Further Research**

This study was an exploratory and preliminary attempt to identify the presence of distinctive patterns in visual-verbal argumentation on populist party websites. While it did not identify patterns in the prominence of visual argumentation on populist websites, a study of a broader and more comprehensive scope might. Accounting for the *organizational* and *interpersonal* meanings created by visual elements, for example, might demonstrate that populist visual argumentation has more in common with more subtle and multimodal visual cues than with purely visual illustrations. A study with a larger dataset of websites, or one which considers multiple website sections beyond the home page, too, might detect more details of the populist and non-populist visual grammar of website design.

Another avenue for future research concerns the differences between the online self-expression of right- and left-leaning populist parties. As a thin ideology, populism is frequently coupled with other ideologies, and can be located at either side of the political spectrum (Freeden 1996; Kramer 2017). While the communicative characteristics of interest to this study – emotionality, people-centrism, and anti-elitism – are shared by left- and right-leaning populists, there might be differences in how parties manifest these qualities depending on what other ideologies constitute their political profile.

Finally, this study opened up the question of what, if anything, should be done about the seemingly missed opportunity of political party branding through websites. Continued research is needed to provide a definitive answer to whether more distinctive political brands could make non-populist parties more competitive, or instead turn populism into a new reality of political communication for all.

## Conclusion

This study attempted to identify the role of visual elements in constructing populist identities on party websites, and analyzed the home pages of 20 websites belonging to the most successful populist parties in Europe and their non-populist counterparts. Past research identified a distinctive style and logic of populist communication, and established how vital the Internet is for its success (Engesser, Fawzi and Larsson 2017; Kramer 2017). Meanwhile, political and electoral communication research points at the persisting prominence of party websites as the major platforms for parties' online presence (Schweitzer 2011), and specifically concerning the self-representing and branding efforts (Rutter, Hanretty and Lettice 2015). Unique, customizable online spaces, websites have the potential to shape and manifest political brands and brand personalities, especially through visual communication (Cyr et al. 2009; Karimov et al. 2011). Online visuals of multiple types and on multiple levels help the audience navigate and interpret the contents of a web page (Knox 2017), and can be extremely powerful at advancing persuasive political arguments (Richardson and Colombo 2013; Grabe and Bucy 2009). Based on these findings of previous research, this study addressed the prominence of visual elements in manifesting populist identities on party websites.

Unexpectedly, the present analysis did not identify significant differences in the degree to which populist and non-populist party websites' home pages are dominated by visuals. Furthermore, the qualitative assessment demonstrated that the home pages are visually very similarly organized overall; irrespective of the ideological stances, and across both populist and non-populist datasets. This lack of visually distinctive website design demonstrates, on the one hand, that, in spite of the expectations backed by the theoretical analysis, populist parties do not translate their distinctive communicative tactics into party websites, and play by mainstream rules, opting for traditional and

39

"typical" online self-representation. On the other hand, these findings hint at a potentially missed opportunity for continued political branding for parties overall. Since it is mostly politically engaged citizens and existing supporters who visit party websites (Folstad, Johannessen and Luders 2016; Norris 2003), it appears that parties only put limited efforts into branding for these already established audiences, and concentrate on attracting and converting new voters through social media (Campbell and Lee 2016). To sustain the electoral community, however, and keep the existing supporters, continued branding efforts are necessary, and party websites present a unique opportunity for that. Yet, this judgement is equivocal: for non-populist and mainstream parties, adopting unique and visually memorable online identities might mean putting a larger share of their communicative emphasis on the emotional and intuitive, thus embracing and normalizing the populist communicative strategies.

# Reference List

Aaker, Jennifer L. "Dimensions of Brand Personality." *Journal of Marketing Research* 34, no. 3 (August 1997): 347-356. https://www.haas.berkeley.edu/groups/finance/Papers/Dimensions%20of%20BP%20JMR%201997.pdf.

"About Populism Tracker." *The Progressive Post*. Accessed May 19, 2018. https://progressivepost.eu/spotlights/populism/about/

Abts, Koen and Stefan Rummens. "Populism versus Democracy." *Political Studies* 55 (2007): 405-424. Doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9248.2007.00657.x.

Akkerman, Tjitske. "Friend or Foe? Right-Wing Populism and the Popular Press in Britain and the Netherlands." *Journalism* 12, no. 8 (2011): 931-945. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884911415972.

Albertazzi Daniel and Duncan McDonnell. *Twenty First Century Populism. The Spectre of Western European Democracy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Ali, Sadaf Rashad, Debbie James and Fred Vultee. "Strike a Pose: Comparing Associated Press and UNICEF Visual Representations of the Children in Darfur." *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 3, no. 1 (2013): 1-26. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africonfpeacrevi.3.1.1.

Altheide, David L. "Media Logic, Social Control, and Fear." *Communication Theory* 23 (2013):223-238. Doi: 10.1111/comt.12017.

Blair, Anthony J. "The Rhetoric of Visual Arguments." *Groundwork in the Theory of Argumentation* (2012): 261-279. Doi: 10.1007/978-94-007-2363-4_19.

Bonnie M., Meguid. "Competition Between Unequals: The Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success." The American Political Science Review 99, no. 3 (Aug 2005): 347-359. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30038944.

Boros, Tamas, Daniel Bartha, Rene Cuperus, Maria Freitas, Gabor Gyori, Daniel Hegedus, Gergely Laki, Eszter Petronella Soos, Ernst Stetter. *The State of Populism in Europe*

*2017*. FEPS Policy Solutions and FES: Budapest, 2017. https://progressivepost.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/The-State-of-Populism-in-2017_web-1.pdf.

Bos, Linda and Kees Brants. "Populist Rhetoric in Politics and the Media: a Longitudinal Study of the Netherlands." *European Journal of Communication* 29, no. 6 (2014): 703-719. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323114545709.

Boyte, Harry C. "Introduction: Reclaiming Populism as a Different Kind of Politics." *The Good Society* 21, no. 2 (2012): 173-176. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5325/goodsociety.21.2.0173.

Branter, Cornelia, Katharina Lobinger and Irmgard Wetzstein. "Effects of Visual Framing on Emotional Responses and Evaluations of News Stories about the Gaza Conflict 2009." *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (2009): 523-540. http://www.academia.edu/4765579/Effects_of_Visual_Framing_on_Emotional_Responses_and_Evaluations_of_News_Stories_about_the_Gaza_Conflict_2009.

Caiani, Manuela and Paolo Graziano. "Varieties of Populism: Insights from the Italian Case." *Rivista Italiana di Scienza Politica* 1, no. 2 (2016): 1-25. Doi: 10.1017/ipo.2016.6.

Campbell, Vincent and Benjamin Lee. "Party Branding: A Case Study of Online Political Posters." In Lilleker D., Pack M. (eds*) Political Marketing and the 2015 UK General Election*. Palgrave Studies in Political Marketing and Management. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58440-3_4.

Canovan, Margaret. "Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy." *Political Studies* 47, no. 1 (1999): 2-16. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00184.

Cheles, Luciano. "Back to the Future. The Visual Propaganda of Alleanza Nazionale (1994-2009)." *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010): 232-311. https://doi.org/10.1080/13545711003606644.

Colleoni, E., A. Rozza and A. Arvidsson, A. "Echo Chamber or Public Sphere? Predicting Political Orientation and Measuring Political Homophily in Twitter Using Big Data." *Journal of Communication* 64, no. 2 (2014): 317–332. Doi: 10.1111/jcom.12084. Cited in Engesser, Sven, Nayla Fawzi and Anders Olof Larssen. "Populist Online

Communication: Introduction to the Special Issue." Information, Communication and Society 20, no. 9 (2017): 1279-1292. Doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328525.

Cosgrove, K. M. "Political Branding in the Modern Age: Effective Strategies, Tools and Techniques." In J. Lees-Marshment (ed.). *Routlege Handbook of Political Marketing*. London: Routlege, 2012. Cited in Campbell, Vincent and Benjamin Lee. "Party Branding: A Case Study of Online Political Posters." In Lilleker D., Pack M. (eds*) Political Marketing and the 2015 UK General Election*. Palgrave Studies in Political Marketing and Management. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58440-3_4.

Cyr, Dianne, Milena Head, Hector Larios and Bring Pan. "Exploring Human Images in Website Design: a Multi-Method Approach." *MIS Quarterly* 33, no. 3 (Sep. 2009): 539-566. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20650308.

Cyr, Dianne, Milena Head and Hector Larios. "Colour Appeal in Website Design Within and Across Cultures: a Multi-Method Evaluation." *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies* 68, no. 1-2 (January-February 2010): 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhcs.2009.08.005.

Diamond, Larry. "Liberation Technology." *Journal of Democracy* 21, no.3 (July 2010): 69-83. https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/article/liberation-technology.

Eiermann, Martin. "How Donald Trump Fits into the History of American Populism." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2016): 29-34. https://doi.org/10.1111/npqu.12033.

Engesser, Sven, Nayla Fawzi and Anders Olof Larssen. "Populist Online Communication: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Information, Communication and Society* 20, no. 9 (2017): 1279-1292. Doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328525.

Engesser, Sven, Nicole Ernst, Frank Esser and Florin Buchel. "Populism and Social Media: How Politicians Spread a Fragmented Ideology." *Information, Communication and Society* 20, no. 8 (2017): 1109-1126. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1207697.

Fahmy, Shahira and Wayne Wanta. "What Visual Journalists Think Others Think? The Perceived Impact of News Photographs on Public Opinion Formation." *Visual Communications Quarterly* 14 (2007): 16-31. Doi: 10.1080/15551390701361632.

"FEPS & The Progressive Post." *The Progressive Post*. Accessed May 19, 2018. https://progressivepost.eu/about/feps-the-progressive-post/

Folstad, Asbjorn, Marius Johannessen, and Marika Luders. "The Role of a Political Party Website: Lessons Learnt from the User Perspective." Efthimios Tambouris; Ann Macintosh; Frank Bannister. 6th International Conference on Electronic Participation (ePart), Sep 2014, Dublin, Ireland. Springer, Lecture Notes in Computer Science, LNCS-8654, pp.52-63, 2014. Electronic Participation. Doi: 10.1007/978-3-662-44914-1_5.

Freeden, Michael. *Ideologies and political theory. A conceptual approach.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2003. Doi: 10.1093/019829414X.001.0001.

French, Alan and Gareth Smith. "Measuring Political Brand Equity: a Consumer Oriented Approach." *European Journal of Marketing* 44, no. ¾ (2010): 460-477. Doi: https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561011020534.

Galito, Maria Sousa. "Populism as a Political Phenomenon." *Janus.net: e-Journal of International Relations* 9, no. 1 (May-Oct 2018): 53-69. Doi: 10.26619/1647-7251.9.1.4.

Gibson, Rachel K., Kevin Gillan, Fabienne Greffet, Benjamin J. Lee, and Stephen Ward. "Party Organizational Change and ICTs: The Growth of a Virtual Grassroots?" *New Media and Society* 15, no. 1 (2012): 31-51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812457329.

Groshek, Jacob and Jiska Engelbert. "Double Differentiation in a Cross-National Comparison of Populist Political Movements and Online Media Uses in the United States and the Netherlands." *New Media and Society* 15, no. 2 (2013): 183-202. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812450685.

Grabe, Mariana Elizabeth and Erik Page Bucy. *Series in Political Psychology: Image Bite Politics: News and Visual Framing of Elections*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Hillesund, T. *Stor det noye nytt? [Does It Say Anything New?]* Gamle Fredrikstad: Institutt for Journalistikk (1994). Cited in Lundgren, Anna Sofia and Karin Ljuslinder. "'The Baby-Boom is Over and the Ageing Shock Awaits': Populist Media Imagery in News-Press Representations of Population Ageing." *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life* 6, no. 2 (2011): 39-71. http://www.ep.liu.se/ej/ijal/2011/v6/i2/a03/ijal11v6i2a03.pdf.

Hutchinson, David and Samuel D. Bradley. "Memory for Images Intense Enough to Draw Administration's Attention." *Politics and the Life Sciences* 28, no. 1 (March 2009): 31-47. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40587977.

Jansen, Robert S. "Populist Mobilization: A New Theoretical Approach to Populism." *Sociological Theory* 29, no. 2 (June 2011): 75-96. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23076372.

Karens, Rene, Jasper Eshuis, Erik-Hans Klijn, and Joris Voets. "The Impact of Public Branding: An Experimental Study on the Effects of Branding Policy on Citizen Trust." *Public Administration Review* 76, no. 3 (May/June 2016): 486-494. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12501.

Karimov, Farhod P., Malaika Brengman, Leo Van Hove. "The Effect of Website Dimensions on Initial Trust: a Synthesis of the Empirical Literature." *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research* 12, no. 4 (January 2011): 272-301. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237006618_The_Effect_of_Website_Design_Dimensions_on_Initial_Trust_A_Synthesis_of_the_Empirical_Literature.

Knox, John. "Visual-Verbal Communication on Online Newspaper Home Pages." *Visual Communication* 6, no. 1 (2007): 19-53. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357207071464.

Koopmans, R. and S. Olzak. "Discursive opportunities and the evolution of right-wing violence in Germany." *American Journal of Sociology* 110, no. 1 (2004): 198–230. Doi: 10.1086/386271. Cited in Engesser, Sven, Nayla Fawzi and Anders Olof Larssen. "Populist Online Communication: Introduction to the Special Issue." Information, Communication and Society 20, no. 9 (2017): 1279-1292. Doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328525.

Kramer, Benjamin. "Media Populism: A Conceptual Clarification and Some Theses on Its Effects." *Communication Theory* 24, no.1 (2014): 42-60. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12029

Kramer, Benjamin. "Populist Online Practices: The Function of the Internet in the Right-Wing Populism." *Information, Communication and Society* 20, no. 9 (2017): 1293-1309. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328520.

Kress, Gunther and Theo van Leeuwen. *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routlege, 1996.

Lees-Marshment. "The Marriage of Politics and Marketing." *Political Studies* 49 (2001): 692-713. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00337.

Lemke, Jay L. "Discourse and Organizational Dynamics: Website Communication and Institutional Change." *Discourse and Society* 10, no. 1 (January 1999): 21-47. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926599010001002.

Lilleker, Darren G. et al. "Informing, Engaging, Mobilizing or Interacting: Searching for a European Model of Web Campaigning." *European Journal of Communication* 26, no. 3 (2011): 195-213. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323111416182.

Lind, U. "Reportagebild och text" [Report Image and Text]. In T. Borgersen & H. Ellingsen (eds.), *Bildanalys [Image Analysis]*: 76-98. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 1994. Cited in Lundgren, Anna Sofia and Karin Ljuslinder. "'The Baby-Boom is Over and the Ageing Shock Awaits': Populist Media Imagery in News-Press Representations of Population Ageing." *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life* 6, no. 2 (2011): 39-71. http://www.ep.liu.se/ej/ijal/2011/v6/i2/a03/ijal11v6i2a03.pdf.

Lundgren, Anna Sofia and Karin Ljuslinder. "'The Baby-Boom is Over and the Ageing Shock Awaits': Populist Media Imagery in News-Press Representations of Population Ageing." *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life* 6, no. 2 (2011): 39-71. http://www.ep.liu.se/ej/ijal/2011/v6/i2/a03/ijal11v6i2a03.pdf.

Lupu, Noam. "Brand Dilution and the Breakdown of Political Parties in Latin America." *World Politics* 66, no. 4 (2014): 561-602. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887114000197.

Martinec, Radan and Andrew Salway. "A System for Image-Text Relations in New (and Old) Media." *Visual Communication* 4, no. 3 (October 2005): 337-371. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357205055928.

Meguid, Bonnie M. "Competition between Unequals: the Role of Mainstream Party Strategy in Niche Party Success." *The American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005): 347-359. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30038944.

Mudde, Cas. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition Ltd.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004. http://politiki.bg/downloads/261071628/popzeitgeist.pdf.

Naseer, Mirza Muhammad and Khalid Mahmood. "Ready for e-Electioneering? Empirical Evidence from Pakistani Political Parties' Websites." *Internet Research* 26, no. 4 (2016): 901-918. https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-04-2014-0099.

Nielsen, Sigge Winther and Martin Vinæs Larsen. "Party Brands and Voting." *Electoral Studies* 33 (March 2014): 153-165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2013.08.001.

Norris, Pippa. "Preaching to the Converted? Pluralism, Participation and Party Websites." *Party Politics* 9 no. 1 (2003): 21-45. https://doi.org/10.1177/135406880391003.

Ogden, Jessica, Gill Walt, and Louisiana Lush. "The Politics of 'Branding' in Policy Transfer: the Case of DOTS for Tuberculosis Control." *Social Science and Medicine* 57, no. 1 (2003): 179-188. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0277-9536(02)00373-8.

Pariser, Eli. *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*. New York: Penguin Press, 2011.

Parry, Kati. "A Visual Framing Analysis of British Press Photography during the 2006 Israel-Lebanon Conflict." *Media, War & Conflict* 3, no.1 (2010): 67-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635210353679.

*Parties and Elections in Europe*. Accessed May 19, 2018. http://www.parties-and-elections.eu/countries.html

Parvu, Camil Alexandru. "Syndrome or Symptom: Populism and Democratic Malaise in Post-Communist Romania." In *Thinking Through Transition: Liberal Democracy,*

*Authoritarian Pasts, and Intellectual History in East Central Europe After 1989*, edited by Michael Kopecek and Piotr Wcislik, 259-274. Central European University Press, 2015. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7829/j.ctt19z3941.11.

Prior, Markus. "Visual Political Knowledge: A Different Road to Competence?" *The Journal of Politics* 76, no. 1 (October 2013): 41-57. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1017/s0022381613001096.

Richardson, John and Monica Colombo. "Continuity and Change in Anti-Immigrant Discourse in Italy: An Analysis of the Visual Propaganda of the Lega Nord." *Journal of Language and Politics* 12, no. 2 (2013): 180-202. Doi: 10.1075/jlp.12.2.02ric.

Richardson, John E. and Ruth Wodak. "The Impact of Visual Racism: Visual Arguments in Political Leaflets of Austrian and British Far-Right Parties." *Controversia* 6, no. 2 (2009): 45-77. http://engl894dwrs13.courses.digitalodu.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Wodak.pdf.

Rutter, Richard, Chris Hanretty and Fiona Lettice. "Political Brands: Can Parties Be Distinguished by Their Online Brand Personality?" *Journal of Political Marketing* (2015). Doi: 10.1080/15377857.2015.1022631.

Salgado, Susana. "Where's Populism? Online Media and the Diffusion of Populist Discourses and Styles in Portugal." *European Political Science*, 2018. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-017-0137-4.

Scammel, Margaret. *Consumer Democracy: The Marketing of Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Schmuck Desiree and Jorg Matthes. "Effects of Economic and Symbolic Threat Appeals in Right-Wing Populist Advertising on Anti-Immigrant Attitudes: The Impact of Textual and Visual Appeals." *Political Communication* 34, no. 4 (2017): 607-627. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2017.1316807.

Schroeder, Ralph. *Social Theory After the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization*. UCL Press, 2018. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt20krxdr.

Schweitzer, Eva Johanna. "Normalization 2.0: A longitudinal analysis of German online campaigns in the national elections 2002–9." *European Journal of Communication* 26, no. 4 (2011): 310-327. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323111423378.

Spruyt Bram, Gil Keppens and Filip Van Droogenbroeck. "Who Supports Populism and What Attracts People to It?" *Political Research Quarterly* 69, no. 2 (2016): 335-346. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44018014.

Taggart, Paul. "Populism and Representative Politics in Contemporary Europe." *Journalism of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004): 269-288. https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263528.

Tai, Zixue. "Networked Resistance: Digital Populism, Online Activism, and Mass Dissent in China." *Popular Communication. The International Journal of Media and Culture* 13, no. 2 (2015): 120-131. https://doi.org/10.1080/15405702.2015.1021469.

"The Populism Map." *The Progressive Post*. Accessed May 19, 2018. https://progressivepost.eu/spotlights/populism/map/.

"The Populism Graph." *The Progressive Post*. Accessed May 19, 2018. https://progressivepost.eu/spotlights/populism/graph/.

"T-Test." *Investopedia*. Accessed May 31, 2018. https://www.investopedia.com/terms/t/t-test.asp.

Van Kessel, Stijn and Remeco Castelein. "Shifting the Blame. Populist Politicians' Use of Twitter as a Tool of Opposition." *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 12, no.2 (2016): 594-614. https://www.jcer.net/index.php/jcer/article/view/709.

Wells, John D., Joseph S. Valacich and Traci J. Hess. "What Signal Are You Sending? How Website Quality Influences Perceptions of Product Quality and Purchase Intentions." *MIS Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 2011): 373-396. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23044048.

# Appendix 1: Coding Sheet

### Populist Parties

| Party | Website | No. Words | No. Images | Ratio | Date |
|-------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|------|
| Fidesz | http://www.fidesz.hu/ | 480 | 22 | 21.82 | 5.29.2018 |
| Law and Justice | http://pis.org.pl/ | 890 | 32 | 28.70 | 5.29.2018 |
| ANO 2011 | https://www.anobudelip.cz/cs/ | 777 | 29 | 27.81 | 5.29.2018 |
| Five Star Movement | https://www.movimento5stelle.it/ | 453 | 3 | 151 | 5.29.2018 |
| AKEL | http://www.akel.org.cy/ | 270 | 28 | 9.64 | 5.29.2018 |
| Estonian Centre Party | http://www.keskerakond.ee/et/ | 247 | 8 | 30.88 | 5.29.2018 |
| SYRIZA | https://www.syriza.gr/ | 370 | 10 | 37 | 5.29.2018 |
| GERB | http://www.gerb.bg/bg | 395 | 21 | 18.8 | 5.29.2018 |
| FPÖ | https://www.fpoe.at/ | 507 | 36 | 14.1 | 5.29.2018 |
| Jobbik | https://www.jobbik.hu/ | 654 | 45 | 14.5 | 5.29.2018 |

### Non-Populist Parties

| Party | Website | No. Words | No. Images | Ratio | Date |
|-------|---------|-----------|------------|-------|------|
| KDNP | https://kdnp.hu/ | 605 | 50 | 12.1 | 5.29.2018 |
| MSZP | https://mszp.hu/ | 180 | 13 | 13.8 | 5.29.2018 |
| Civic Platform | http://www.platforma.org/ | 166 | 13 | 12.8 | 5.29.2018 |
| Civic Democratic Party | https://www.ods.cz/ | 731 | 21 | 34.8 | 5.29.2018 |
| Democratic Party (Italy) | https://www.partitodemocratico.it/ | 562 | 15 | 37.5 | 5.29.2018 |
| DISY | http://disy.org.cy/ | 489 | 19 | 25.7 | 5.29.2018 |
| Estonian Reform Party | https://www.reform.ee/ | 872 | 12 | 72.7 | 5.29.2018 |
| New Democracy | https://nd.gr/ | 470 | 7 | 67.14 | 5.29.2018 |
| Bulgarian Socialist Party | http://bsp.bg/ | 759 | 11 | 69 | 5.29.2018 |
| ÖVP | https://www.oevp.at/ | 432 | 16 | 27 | 5.29.2018 |