Populist Political Communication in Europe

Edited by
Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser,
Carsten Reinemann, Jesper Strömbäck,
and Claes H. de Vreese

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Populist Political Communication in Europe

Populism, in all its varieties, has become a force across Europe. At last, we have a collection that combines a variety of state-level analyses with an unyielding conceptual rigour. For scholars in Europe and beyond, his collection promises to nourish informed discussion of the populist challenge for years to come.

—*Michael Higgins, University of Strathclyde, UK*

In an increasing number of countries around the world, populist leaders, political parties, and movements have gained prominence and influence, either by electoral successes on their own or by influencing other political parties and the national political discourse. While it is widely acknowledged that the media, and the role of communication more broadly, are key to understanding the rise and success of populist leaders, parties and movements, there is however very little research on populist political communication, at least in the English-speaking research literature.

Originating from a research project funded by the European Cooperation in Scientific and Technology (COST), this book seeks to advance this research. It includes examinations of 24 European countries and focuses on three areas within the context of populism and populist political communication: populist actors as communicators, the media and populism, and citizens and populism.

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Part I
Introduction and Conceptual Challenges

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1 Introduction
Comprehending Populist Political Communication

Toril Aalberg and Claes H. de Vreese

Introduction

Although populist politics is a well-known phenomenon in many European democracies, its communicative aspects have been underexplored or often ignored. Yet—in light of the current large-scale social, political, and economic turmoil of recent populist backlashes against governments, and of the changing media environment—the study of populist political communication has never been more important. The purpose of this book is to provide information and knowledge about the conditions that give rise to the presence (or absence) of populist political communication and about its impact in different European democracies.

Over the years, as populist parties have gained electoral success, an increasing number of researchers have started to study populist parties and their supporters. To understand populism as an increasingly pervasive phenomenon in European politics, it is crucial to understand the characteristics and organization of populist parties as well as their electoral foundation. However, as we will show throughout this book, *communication*—a key element of this phenomenon—has mostly been overlooked. Systematic knowledge is sparse on questions related to populist actors as communicators, to the role of the media, and to the impact of populist communication strategies on citizens. This sparsity is surprising since the populist zeitgeist, as signaled by Mudde (2004) more than a decade ago, was in part seen to be caused by the media's preference for, and receptivity toward, populist actors.

We believe that it is more important now than ever to map, dissect, and explicate the phenomenon of populist political communication. As populism increases over time and space, we need to understand how communication may be related to populism's growth. Given that previously marginalized populist actors have become a significant and powerful part of the political scene in many European countries, an important question is whether their position is related to the way populists communicate and interact with the media.

Although specific, systematic, comparative research is lacking, several arguments have been put forward suggesting that communication plays a significant role in the rise of populism. Populist parties are said to be more dependent on the media for communication because they have weaker party organization compared to the old, traditional parties. Another argument is that the news media tend to welcome the dramatic headlines that are created

by populist actors; some scholars therefore claim that the more commercial media—such as tabloid newspapers and private broadcasters—give increasing attention to populist actors, because the accompanying headlines attract larger audiences (Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003). If this association is true, populism will increase as media systems across Europe become more commercialized. Thus, we have a striking paradox: Although it is widely acknowledged that the media and, more broadly, the role of communication are key to understanding the rise and success of populist leaders, parties, and movements, research on populist political communication is scant. The few exceptions that exist are typically scattered across various country-specific case studies in a variety of languages. We therefore have yet to fully understand this phenomenon and the challenges that it poses.

This book offers the first systematic, large-scale, comparative review of extant research on populist political communication in Europe. The review covers research published not only in English but also in the native language of each participating country. Native-language research is a resource of particular value, since most of what we know about populism and communication is based either on the international literature or on only one or two specific cases. In this first chapter, we will provide an introduction to the central debates related to the phenomenon of populist political communication and offer an outline of the book's organization and the method behind the country reviews.

Central Debates

The few studies that have empirically explored populist political communication highlight the role that communication and the media play in populist politics. These studies have broken important ground and point to potentially important problems. But they also have significant shortcomings: they tend to be single-country studies, to offer very small comparisons, and to focus on single elections, organizations, or individuals. They do not capture many of the latest developments or look at populism in an integrated way. Most research also treats populism as a danger to democracy. Yet a more neutral and comprehensive understanding that takes populism seriously as an expression of democratic malaise may be more productive. It might open our eyes to the conditions that are responsible for making this political communicative style currently so popular.

In the study of political communication, the focus typically centers around three key actors: (a) the political parties, candidates, or movements, (b) the media, and (c) citizens as voters and audience. One central insight is the importance of the mass media in widening the appeal of populist political actors. Many scholars maintain that populist actors need the "oxygen of publicity", which is often supplied by the mass media. For instance, in his examination of European far-right parties, Ellinas (2010) found that the media control the gateway to the electoral marketplace and that they enable smaller, newer groups to reach larger audiences than their resources would ordinarily allow

(see also Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Mazzoleni et al., 2003). No guarantee is given, however, that all publicity is good publicity. For example, some researchers observe that the media can act as a foe in relation to the appeal of populist actors. As Bos, van der Brug, and de Vreese (2011) found in the Netherlands, how populist actors are portrayed is important. Populist actors often receive critical coverage in the "elite" media and favorable coverage in the popular press (Mazzoleni et al., 2003). That said, other studies suggest that the picture may be more complex with no simple binary divide between elite and tabloid newspapers (Akkerman, 2011).

Some scholars have argued that context is important. For instance, Mazzoleni et al. (2003) note that the media might be more likely to give coverage to populist actors when certain salient issues dominate the news. Similarly, Walgrave and De Swert (2004) found that by focusing on certain issues, such as crime and immigration, the media aided the rise of the populist Vlaams Blok in Belgium (see also Ellinas, 2010). Other studies suggest that populist actors can help their cause through the adoption of particular communication strategies and the use of the Internet, thereby bypassing several obstacles posed by more traditional media (see Atton, 2006; Bartlett, Birdwell, & Littler, 2011; Mazzoleni et al., 2003). Context also seems to influence how populist parties are perceived and how they communicate; for example, successful populist parties seem to lose their protest appeal or even tone down their populism entirely (Schumacher & Rooduijn, 2013; Rooduijn, de Lange, & van der Brug, 2014).

It is important to stress, however, that the study of populist political communication must not be confined to the analysis of populist actors only. Indeed, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) note that populism can also be seen as a political communication *style*, one that contains a central binary between an "us" and a "them" (see Chapter 2 in this volume for a further discussion). In this respect, populist communication is not a question of either/or, but rather one of strength, degree, and type. Others have identified what they call common populist frames (see Caiani & della Porta, 2011; Rydgren, 2005). Studies of populism in the popular media have found that some tabloid media outlets in the United Kingdom readily appropriate populist binaries in relation to immigration and the European Union (Stanyer, 2007). Other studies demonstrate that mainstream political parties and their leaders are not averse to using populist political rhetoric (Cranmer, 2011).

A handful of studies have examined the media's impact on support for populist actors. These studies have generally found a link (in some countries) between the prominence of anti-immigration issues in the news and the share of support for anti-immigration parties, even when controlling for other factors (see Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2006, 2009; Gerstlé, 2003). Other studies have found that watching commercial television correlates with opposition to immigration, whereas the opposite is true for public service news (Karlsen & Aalberg, 2015; Strabac, Thorbjørnsrud, & Jenssen, 2012). There is no consensus on the effect of different

communication channels, and it might be, for instance, that the Web reinforces the views of those who already identify with extreme political ideas (see Bartlett et al., 2011).

The studies mentioned above have broken important ground and started a timely debate, but in many regards, they have failed to look at populism in an integrated way, since none of them has explored the relationship between populist actors, the media, and citizens cohesively. Without a concerted and co-ordinated effort, we believe that the impact of populist political communication on democratic life cannot be fully understood.

Many of the key shortcomings in the previous literature can be grouped according to three main challenges. The first challenge is to define populist political actors and communication and to determine communication success. While studies have tended to focus on right-wing (neo-populist) political actors and their antagonism toward conventional political elites, the potential diversity of populist communicators must be recognized. The existing understanding of what constitutes populism and populist actors must be rethought, taking account of the diversity of actors and discourses that permeate the mediated public spheres of European democracies. Many, but by no means all, of these actors could be described as right-wing neo-populists. Moreover, a range of left-wing groups have been actively involved in protests (e.g., SYRIZA in Greece, the Socialist Party in the Netherlands, The Left in Germany, and the Left Front and the Communist Party in France). In addition, transient-issue entrepreneurs fighting for single causes are on the rise, including the Pirate Party in Sweden and Germany and the 5 Star Movement in Italy. These examples of populist actors cannot be classified neatly as right-wing neo-populists, although they may share similar populist communication strategies.

The extent to which the use of public relations strategies empowers populist political communicators must be understood. Research in political science and communication science shows that the use of such strategies can enable advocacy groups to set the media agenda, but is this success replicated elsewhere? Similarly, at a micro level, the personal communicative qualities of individual actors require more exploration. To what extent do rhetorical skills, for example, enhance or retard actors' ability to get their message across? Moreover, the spread of the Web and the proliferation of social media have provided new spaces for political actors to exercise their voices and to interact with a new generation of citizens. Is the Web enhancing the communicative potential of populist actors? And if so, in what way? To what extent is the Web being used by populist political actors to engage citizens and mobilize supporters? Of course, it is also important to build on existing piecemeal insights into the populist political communication styles and frames that have been adopted by mainstream political parties in order to further investigate the extent to which this process has taken place. Finally, comprehensive assessments of populist political actors and their communicative activities outside election campaign periods must be made. Understanding the extent to which populist discourse enters the mainstream requires a more inclusive and longer term perspective than mere election campaigns.

The second challenge is to establish the media's role in the promotion of populist politics. We believe that the current view of the media's role in enabling or retarding the growth of populist politics is likely too simplistic. Conclusions on this topic become even more pressing given the widely documented commercialization and growing competition in the media environment and the rise of the Web. In some countries, the competitive online networked environment may provide populist actors with news opportunities that allow them to "crash" the established media gates. With online news being increasingly driven by readers, potential exists for grassroots campaigns to shape news agendas. Drawing on research from the United States, it is possible to imagine situations where extreme views shape the editorial policies of certain media. As the power of traditional, established media outlets wanes in many polities, we need to move away from traditional gatekeeper models and recognize the increasing complexity of the environments in which media organizations now operate. It may well be that commercialization, growing competition, and the Web weaken the traditional publicizing function of established media outlets, but these forces may also encourage some ratings-driven outlets to pander to populist reactionary political agendas and to adopt populist frames on a range of prescient political issues.

The third challenge is to understand the effects that populist messages have on citizens and how citizens engage with populist political communication. Current approaches have focused almost exclusively on election campaigns and the media's impact on support for populist actors. In this context, well-documented trends in national electorates—such as party-voter de-alignment and exposure via different media—might make citizens more susceptible to populist appeals. Those who rely mainly on the tabloid media for news may, for example, be more likely to support populist political parties. There is little exploration, however, of the different possible effects of the media, such as agenda setting, priming, and framing—key areas in media effects research. One recent study based on priming theory showed how a combination of party cues, immigrant cues, and anti-politics cues underlie support for right-wing populism, anti-immigrant attitudes, and political cynicism (Sheets, Bos, & Boomgaarden, 2015).

Such exceptions notwithstanding, the way citizens interact with populist messages and actors in everyday life is generally underexplored. This situation is a paradox, given that citizen engagement with populist political actors and discourses is a crucial part of understanding populism. Another reason why these key factors require exploration is the increased opportunities for citizens to exercise their voice in blogs and via social networking on a range of issues. New possible patterns of political engagement are emerging. But to what extent is the Web used to mobilize support for populism? U.S. research points to extreme views possibly increasingly populating a growing political fringe due to, in part, selective exposure of like-minded actors. But we still need a thorough exploration of public attitudes toward populist messages, the consequences of these messages, and the people most likely to engage with populist messages and in populist political activity.

Comprehending Populist Political Communication

This book is set in the midst of what can be labeled as "populist times," where ongoing political and societal transformations like globalization and responses to a long recession dominate the agenda. It is highly relevant to map extant and ongoing scholarship on populist political communication to collectively arrive at conclusions that transcend specific electoral moments, specific candidates or parties, or specific media platforms. Consequently, this book aims to be comprehensive and inclusive.

We organize the shortcomings in the previous literature according to the classical distinction between a focus on political actors, a focus on media, and a focus on citizens. While many important questions and challenges lie within each of these pillars—such as the definition of populist actors and communication styles—many interesting questions are likewise to be found where the three pillars intersect. For instance, to fully understand populist political communication, it is important to explore the relationship between political actors and the media in addition to the relationship between media and citizens. In this book, we will search for answers to the questions that are related specifically to these groups as well as to questions that arise at each intersection (see Figure 1.1).

While the purpose of this first chapter is to outline some of the key discussions and shortcomings in existing research on populism and populist political communication, Chapter 2 will outline some of the main theoretical lines of thought and move toward a working definition of populism and populist actors, seeking to explore their activities, communication, and effects in a large-scale comparative context.

This book provides insight into populism and populist political communication from current research and public debates in 24 European countries. We have chosen to present the knowledge from the various countries in groups drawn from four main European geographical areas. Although there are many differences between countries, within these areas are also many similarities. In Northern Europe, for instance, the focus has largely been on typical right-wing, neo-populist parties, whereas in the southern parts of Europe, populism more often also includes left-wing populism and a strong focus on individual populist leaders. In Western Europe, one of the key denominators has been populist parties' influence on long-established, mainstream parties. Typical for many of the central and eastern European countries is the absence of a populism that is based on immigrant out-groups; rather, a stronger focus centers on other ethnic or religious minorities and anti-elitism.

The individual country chapters (found in Parts II–IV) follow a systematic logic and structure. They begin by providing an overview of country-specific definitions of populism and populist actors and the extent of existing research. All chapters offer a review of country-specific, authoritative, scientific literature published since 1995 that deals with the themes of the three pillars identified earlier: (a) populist actors as communicators and populist communication by political actors, (b) the media and populism, and (c) citizens and the effects of populist messages. The authors have

How do populist political actors use media to get attention and gain support? How do media cover populist versus non-populist political actors?

Do populist actors use a specific and unique style of political communication? What are the differences between the strategies and tactics used by right-wing and left-wing populists, and by populist and non-populist actors?

What are the typical features of the media discourse on populism? Are there differences between various types of media?

How do populist media frames affect citizens? How does audience demand influence populist media content?

Political Actors

Media

Citizens

Which groups of citizens support and which groups oppose populist actors and populist messages? How much knowledge and experience do citizens have of populist actors?

How do populist messages affect citizens? How do citizens punish or reward actors who use populist vs non-populist communication styles?

Figure 1.1 The three pillars of populist political communication.

investigated both native language publications and international publications referring to each country. In addition, each chapter summarizes and describes recent developments that have not been reflected in systematic scholarly research.

To avoid a priori inclusion or exclusion of actors and communication patterns, the chapters predominantly include research in which either actors or communication has been labeled populist by academic scholars, or alternatively—if no research exists—in the public debate. Since the term *populism* is uncommon in some countries, in a few instances actors or political communication have been identified as falling under the populism category even if they are not called as such by current research.

To begin with, as a working definition of populism, all authors were asked to refer to the basic indicators of the different types of populism described by Jagers and Walgrave (2007; see also Chapter 2 in this volume). *Complete populism* includes reference and appeals to the people, as well as anti-elitism and exclusion of out-groups. *Excluding populism* includes only reference and appeals to the people and exclusion of out-groups, whereas *anti-elitist populism* includes reference and appeals to the people and anti-elitism. Finally, *empty populism* includes only reference and appeals to the people.

The book concludes with three chapters organized according to the above three pillars. These chapters offer cross-cutting reviews of key findings and identify current gaps in the research literature. Looking at actors, we conclude that many studies emphasize that populist rhetoric is often emotional and includes blame attribution and scapegoats. In many countries in recent years, populist actors have moved closer to political power and government. At the same time, these general observations hold only to some extent, since there is tremendous variation in the type and nature of populist actors.

Regarding the media, we conclude that rising polls often result in media attention to populist actors, that populist actors per se do not seem to suffer from negative news coverage, and that some media are critical of populist actors out of concern for democracy. Again, dissecting these media roles comes with caution, given cross-national variation. Looking at effects, we conclude that—except for a few countries—we have very little knowledge about the typical populist voter or the effects of populist communication on citizens' attitudes.

In addition to summarizing the cross-national findings, the three concluding chapters also provide an overview of conditionalities and factors affecting populist political communication and offer avenues for future systematic and cross-nationally comparable research on this topic.

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2 Populist Political Communication

Toward a Model of Its Causes, Forms, and Effects

Carsten Reinemann, Toril Aalberg, Frank Esser, Jesper Strömbäck, and Claes H. de Vreese

Introduction

In his famous book, *Social science concepts: A systematic analysis* (1984), Giovanni Sartori (1984) is hard on his fellow scholars in the social sciences. Bemoaning a lack of conceptual clarity and a widespread collective ambiguity of social science concepts, he diagnoses a "state of chaos" in most social science disciplines and calls for concept reconstruction as "a highly needed therapy" (pp. 41–42). Although Sartori did not explicitly refer to populism in the context of these remarks, it seems fair to say that they apply to this concept. Populism surely ranks among the most popular and, at the same time, most contested concepts in the social sciences. Numerous articles and chapters have been written about how populism should best be defined and which elements "really" constitute populism. However, there is still no consensus about what the term should describe. Of course, it can be argued that it is usual for social science concepts to be contested and that alternative conceptualizations and definitions provide scholars with the opportunity to select the specific version of a concept that suits them and their research interests best. Nonetheless, problems like collective conceptual ambiguity, lack of precision, and the widespread use of different terms for describing the same phenomena (*synonymy*) or of the same term for describing different phenomena (*homonymy*) can have negative consequences. Most importantly, such inconsistencies hamper scientific discourse and communication between science and society. Further, they endanger the comparability of findings and, as a consequence, impede the accumulation and integration of research results, theory building, and the thorough explanation of the social phenomena at hand.

The main purpose of this volume is certainly not to add yet another definition to the literature on populism. But given the above-mentioned situation, we will now take a brief look at some definitions of, and elements related to, populism to arrive at a working definition that is well suited to research on political communication. This step demonstrates our disagreement with scholars who have argued for completely discarding populism as a social science concept or category. We are aware, however, of the problems

associated with the academic usage of the term "populism"; it is often used as a swearword by politicians, journalists, and citizens to accuse others of cheap propaganda with emotional arguments, of presenting simple solutions to complex problems (*simplification*), and of floating with the tide of public opinion (*opportunism*) or to compromise parties and politicians by associating them with actors on the fringes of the political spectrum (*extremism, radicalism*).

In this chapter, we will first argue that one way of looking at populism is to conceptualize it as a form of political communication characterized by some crucial key elements. We will then discuss those key elements and distinguish several types of populist political communication resulting from combinations of those key elements. Finally, we will suggest a preliminary model of populist political communication that distinguishes different levels of analysis and that identifies various key components that should be taken into account during the analysis of populist communication. This model should be regarded as a first step toward more elaborate models—which can be developed on the basis of the reviews presented in this book—and toward additional research to be carried out in the future.

Populism as a Form of Political Communication

In the numerous accounts on populism, it has been conceptualized as a communication style (e.g., Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), as a "thin" ideology (e.g., Mudde, 2004), as a discourse practice (e.g., De Cleen, 2012; Laclau, 2005), and as a mental map "through which individuals analyse and comprehend political reality" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, pp. 498–499). Basically, we agree with scholars who, following Freeden (1996), conceive of populism as a set of ideas, or as a "thin"-centered ideology. This approach means that populism is a general, abstract concept about politics and society that is open to a diverse set of more concrete political ideas and programs, depending on both national and historical contexts. Moreover, we agree with several scholars who stress the crucial role of communication when empirically investigating populism and when defining it. We therefore hold the view that populism is mostly reflected in the oral, written, and visual communication of individual politicians, parties, social movements, or any other actor that steps into the public sphere (including the media and citizens). This perspective is apparent in the work by Jagers & Walgrave (2007, p. 322), who regard populism as "a communication frame that appeals to and identifies with the people and pretends to speak in their name … It is a master frame, a way to wrap up all kinds of issues." Along the same lines, Rooduijn (2014, p. 3) sees populism more as "a characteristic of a specific message rather than a characteristic of an actor sending that message."

However, this perspective does not deny that political actors, the media, and citizens have ideologies, motives, goals, and attitudes that provide the starting point and lay the groundwork for the communicative acts in which

populist elements can be empirically detected. For example, Hawkins, Riding, and Mudde (2012) use the same terms to describe populism that communication scholars might use to describe a *cognitive frame* affecting communicative behaviour. The authors argue that populism is "a way of seeing the world that is linked to different kinds of languages" (2012, p. 7). Also, Kriesi (2014, p. 363) argues that as "an expression of the populist ideology, populist communication strategies may be used to identify the populist ideology empirically." In fact, recent research has started to probe whether populist ideology may be found not only among political actors but also among citizens, by investigating populism as an individual attitude that can be measured using survey methods (Akkerman, Mudde, & Zaslove, 2014; Elchardus & Spruyt, 2015; Rooduijn, 2014). From a political communication point of view, populism might thus be best understood as a set of features or elements of communicative messages that have their roots in—or resonate with—the goals, motives, and attitudes of political actors, the media, or citizens. From this perspective, political communication research on populism would seek to determine the reasons why different kinds of actors use populist messages, what kind of communication channels those actors use, what populist messages are, why recipients respond to them, and the effects of populist messages on the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of society.

But what additional characteristics should a working definition of populist political communication have? First, populist political communication should be restricted neither to the left nor to the right of the political spectrum, which is in line with arguments put forward by many populism researchers (e.g., Canovan, 1999; Roodujin, 2014: Taggart, 2004). Second, a working definition that is too complex and tries to incorporate too many factors will certainly be a poor starting point for a book that aims to cover various nations and numerous political parties across Europe. Instead, we will be looking for a straightforward working definition that is simple but sufficiently comprehensive to identify the core features of populist political communication.

In fact, numerous definitions of populism exist in the vast literature on this issue, but scholars appear to be converging on at least some elements of populism, although they are sometimes termed differently and are derived from different theoretical backgrounds. In our view, the communicative construction of "the people"—appeals to the people, talking about the people, putting the people and their opinions first in political decisions, or symbolically and rhetorically uniting with the people by talking about "we" and "us"—constitutes the undisputed core of populist communication. Two other oft-mentioned key characteristics are *anti-elitism*—apparent in attacks on, or in criticism of, various kinds of elites, institutions, the establishment, or "the system"—and the *exclusion of out-groups*, which may become apparent in positions toward certain policy issues or in verbal attacks on those groups that are not regarded as a legitimate part of the "real" people.

Several other features that some authors believe to be part of populism we do not regard as essential, including *charismatic leaders* (e.g., Canovan,

1999); the *narrative of crisis and threat* serving as the starting point for populist demands (Moffit & Tormey, 2014, pp. 391–392; Taggart, 2004, pp. 275–276); a tabloid-like style made manifest through certain *rhetorical features*, such as colloquial, emotional language, harshness in attacking opponents and simplicity and directness (Canovan, 1999, pp. 5–6; Moffit & Tormey, 2014, 391–392). We believe that these characteristics can become obstacles when an analysis of populism and its effects is supposed to include a variety of different actors (e.g., individual politicians, parties, media, and citizens), a variety of different channels of communication (e.g., speeches, party manifestos, press releases, media news items and commentaries, online-communication by citizens), or a variety of personal rhetorical styles. We will therefore concentrate on references to the people, anti-elitism, and anti–out-group messages as key elements of populist political communication and discuss them in more detail below.

Based on their empirical analysis of a Belgium election campaign, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) use these three elements to distinguish four different kinds of populism, or populist communication. *Empty populism* means that references to the people are the only element present. References to the people combined with the exclusion of out-groups results in *exclusionary populism*. References to the people combined with attacks on elites is called *anti-elitist populism*, and a combination of all three elements is called *complete populism*. Figure 2.1 illustrates this typology. The construction of these four types of populism is helpful, underscoring that individual features of populism are likely to be found empirically in specific combinations. These combinations match various types of populism distinguished in the literature. For example, empty populism is regarded as typical for otherwise established, non-populist actors that use references to the people as a communication strategy to attract and mobilize voters. Empty populism is similar to *mainstream populism* (Mair, 2002, pp. 92–94). *Anti-elitist populism* is considered to be closer to left-wing populism, because it does not typically engage in the exclusion of minorities. On the other hand, *excluding* and *complete populism* seem to be typical of right-wing populism. In fact, it can be argued that the *combination* of certain communicative elements may largely account for the specific attraction and effects of populist communication; for instance, it may be assumed that the effects of references to the people are boosted when they are combined with criticism of elites and out-groups. By concentrating on four types of populism, however, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) exclude several other potential combinations of their elements of populism. Most importantly (because they are looking for populism, not non-populism), they do not take into account the possibility that a message may include anti-elitism and anti–out-group elements but not appeals to the people. At least when comparing allegedly populist and non-populist messages or when trying to systematically disentangle the effects of these three elements of populism, their presence or absence should be systematically taken into account.
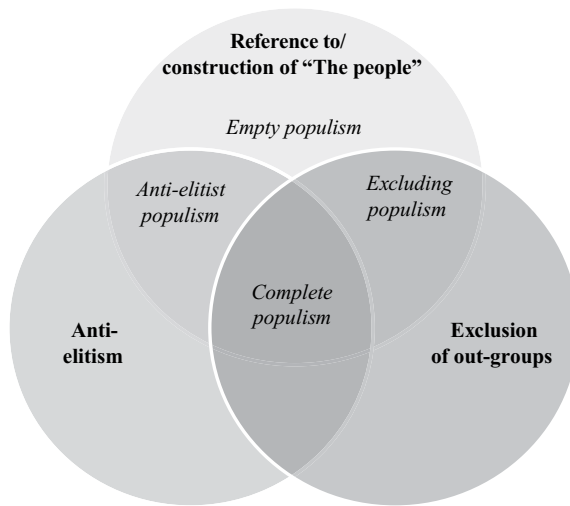
Figure 2.1 Elements and types of populism. Adapted from Jagers and Walgrave (2006, pp. 334–336).

Elements of Populist Communication: The People

All definitions of populism agree that the communicative, discursive construction of an aggregate-level in-group or appeals and references to such a group lie at the very core of populism. This in-group is often called "the people," but other labels are possible, too, giving populist messages a more nationalist (e.g., "the Greek people," "Germans," or "the French"), ethnic, regional, or even religious connotation. But what exactly is meant by "the people"? And can such an unspecific term be at the core of a social science concept? In fact, some authors suggest abandoning "the people" as the core of populism because of the term's inherent vagueness and substituting it with other concepts, such as "the heartland" (Taggart, 2004). However, others regard the often unclear, ambiguous, and unspecific meaning of "the people" and similar terms as one of the key characteristics of populist communication, and argue that this very vagueness is an important reason for the success of populist messages. They hold that because "the people" is open for interpretation, it can serve as an "empty signifier" (Laclau, 2005; also see Mény & Surel, 2002), which allows diverse audiences to unite under a common label despite differing demands or values. In fact, as research on campaign communication has shown, this kind of "(strategic) ambiguity" can be a powerful tactic in political communication, and understanding the use of "the people" and equivalent, fuzzy terms as a deliberate decision on the part of communicators is more than adequate against this background (e.g., Meirowitz, 2005).

But what exactly does an "appeal" or a "reference" to the people mean? Empirical studies have used several ways to identify such appeals and references. The simplest method is to look for the literal usage of "the people"

and other, similar terms like "citizens," "our country," "our society" (e.g., Rooduijn, 2014), or "the common man" and "the man on the street" (e.g., Bos & Brants, 2014). Unfortunately, those studies usually do not report the frequency of the individual terms or document whether the first person plural form ("we," "us") is used. We also do not know whether audience reactions are similar to the various terms. In their study, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) used keywords to measure references to the people but distinguished between direct (e.g., "the people," "the voter") and indirect references (e.g., "public opinion," "democracy"). In addition, they were aware that some references encompassed the population as a whole whereas others included specific segments of the population. However, they do not report in detail what kind of references they found. Finally, a more elaborate and restrictive approach is applied by Cranmer (2011). She counts references to the people as indicators of populism only when politicians explicitly present themselves as advocates of the people (as a whole) or of specific social groups (*advocacy*), when they stress the importance of being responsive to the people (*accountability*), and when they use the alleged will of the people in order to legitimize their political stand, plans, or actions (*legitimization*). Most empirical studies do not restrict their measurement of populism to the term "people," not even to terms addressing the population as a whole. Moreover, they do not look for who might actually be meant by "the people" in the context of the specific message.

Literature interprets and provides suggestions on how, in what context, and with what associations and implications such references and appeals to the people are used. One basic notion is that such references implicitly or explicitly refer to an idealized vision of the community at some point in the past—the "heartland" or the "good old days" (e.g., Taggart, 2004, pp. 274). More specifically, populist messages may vary depending on the things that have changed for the worse since "the good old days" and may accordingly apply different conceptions of "the people," which are implicitly or explicitly expressed. These partly overlapping conceptions can be political ("the people as sovereign"), economic ("the people as class"), nationalist ("peoples as nations"), and cultural ("the ordinary people"; e.g., Canovan, 1999, pp. 4–5; Mény & Surel, 2002).

Thus, when populists refer to "the people," they might explicitly address an in-group or evoke associations that implicitly define it. "The people as sovereign" is based on the notion that the people are the ultimate democratic sovereign but that their interests and values are nonetheless not properly taken into account by the elites. This understanding is related to a general criticism of the functioning of representative democracy and its institutions but does not define "the people" beyond excluding the ruling elites (e.g., Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). "People as class" implies underprivileged citizens who differ from the elites mainly with respect to their economic situation, formal education, and access to power. Appealing to the interests of the underprivileged implies a critique of socio-economic injustice and elites that are much better off than the rest of the population.

The third category is "our people" (Canovan, 1999, p. 5) or "people as nations and ethnic groups" (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). Here, the people are understood in ethnic or nationalist terms, making ethnicity and belonging to the native population the criterion that decides who belongs to "the people" and who does not (Mény & Surel, 2002; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013). And finally, "the people" may also have a more cultural underpinning, in which "the ordinary, common people" are defined not so much on the basis of formal citizenship or ethnicity but rather on the basis of traditional norms and values, and a traditional religion (e.g., Laclau, 2005). An example is contrasting a cosmopolitan, libertarian, city-based elite to traditional rural dwellers. These various meanings of "the people" help distinguish, among others, between socio-economic, agrarian, and xenophobic populism (e.g., Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).

The centrality of "the people" in populism has several implications for the populist perspective on politics and democracy. First of all, several scholars argue that populists overemphasize the importance of the people's sovereignty as a pillar of liberal democracy. As a result, they lose sight of the liberal components of modern democracies that are equally important, including the rule of law, human rights, the protection of minorities, and the division of power. It is argued that populism can therefore be regarded as *democratic illiberalism* for two reasons: First, populism considers "the people" to be the majority, to be always right, and that the people's will should immediately be translated into politics, even at the cost of restrictions that liberal democracies have imposed on themselves to prevent the dangers of a pure rule of the majority (*majoritarianism*; Pappas, 2014). Interestingly, some scholars argue that populism is valuable and important to representative democracies because it alerts elites to problems of representation, thereby strengthening the "democratic" pillar or—as Canovan (1999) puts it—the redemptive side of liberal democracies. Others, however, strongly advocate the view that populism is inherently dangerous and should even be regarded as an enemy of modern liberal democracies because it disregards their liberal elements, has a tendency toward authoritarianism, and might push non-populist political competitors in the same direction, seriously endangering the very existence of democracy (for an overview and a strong, affirmative position on this issue, see Abts & Rummens, 2007).

The second argument why populism can be regarded as illiberal is its rejection of intermediaries and institutions as well as the political discourse fostered by them. From populism's perspective, parties, representatives, and complicated processes of opinion formation are unnecessary because the general will of the people is naturally apparent at any time. Direct, immediate relations between political leaders and the people, acclamation, or even just a political leader who recognizes the peoples' will are seen as sufficient bases for representation and decision making (e.g., Abts & Rummens, 2007; Canovan, 2005, pp. 115). On these grounds, representative democracy is criticized by populists because it prevents common sense and the *volonté*

général to be directly translated into political decisions (e.g., Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Schmitt, 1988; Taggart, 2004, p. 273).

The construction of "the people," "us," and "the citizens" implies homogeneity. "The people" are either seen or constructed as a monolithic block, a unity that has common values and interests and that therefore is able to have a common will (e.g., Canovan 1999; Kriesi, 2014). From this concept follows the critique that populism is inherently *anti-pluralist*. It does not acknowledge the existence of legitimate differences among those who belong to "the people" and therefore often has fundamental problems with compromise and with cultural, religious, sexual, or other kinds of diversity (e.g., Pappas, 2014). The refusal to accept differences is related to what political theorist Carl Schmitt (1988) described as the substantial identity of all citizens in his favored version of democracy, which is one that has a specific idea of not only who belongs to the homogenous political body but also who does not (e.g., Abts & Rummens, 2007).

Finally, when looking at populism from a political communication perspective, another aspect seems crucial. Laclau (2005) and Moffit and Tormey (2014) argue that populist discourses or styles do not simply appeal to a "people" and represent a will that exists before it is represented in communication. Rather, by appealing to "the people," populists "are attempting to bring a subject called 'the people' into being: they produce what they claim to present." (Moffit & Tormey, 2014, pp. 389). In other words, populist communication tries to create a new social identity among citizens or to prime certain aspects of their social identity in order to unite them and generate a sense of belonging to an imagined community charged with positive emotions. In doing so, the construct of "the people" fills the "empty locus of power" in modern democracies, which are characterized by a power that is not permanently held by a ruler but only temporarily by elected officials (Lefort, 1988, pp. 224–235). "The people" can therefore also be viewed as a substitute for a fixed and permanent point of reference and identification that is hard to find in the ongoing and never-ending political struggles of democratic decision making (Abts & Rummens, 2007).

Elements of Populist Communication: The Others (Elites and Out-Groups)

Our discussion of the concept of "the people" shows that communicatively constructing or priming a specific sense of social identity seems to be at the very heart of populism. This point is an important one, because it may at least partly explain the seemingly nebulous nature of the concept and its "thin" ideological basis. Obviously, more than other ideologies, populism essentially fulfils the needs for social integration and community building of its followers (Freeden, 1996, p. 16), who may be feeling especially alienated, excluded, insecure, and uncertain about the future (Elchardus & Spruyt, 2015). In that sense, populism is especially closely related to the

basic human need for belonging and acceptance (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Leary & Cox, 2007, p. 31). If that is true, the openness of populism to any kind of add-on ideology across the political spectrum is no surprise: If the need to belong and social identity are crucial, then political substance becomes secondary.

In addition, concepts and ideas related to social identity might also help to disentangle the connections between the various elements of populist communication. For example, we know from research into social identity that individuals are always part of various social categories and therefore have multiple social identities—for example, with respect to gender, age, income, race, education, nationality, and values. Communicative messages can prime each of these aspects of social identity, varying their influence on information processing, opinion formation, and behavior, and activating notions of the in- and out-groups (Abelson, Dasgupta, & Banaji, 1998). Moreover, social identity can be generated only by social comparison. Becoming aware of or strengthening a certain facet of one's social identity thus always implies comparisons with other individuals or groups. These comparisons go in two directions: On the one hand, individuals look for similarities with others who are perceived as members of their own in-group. On the other hand, people look beyond their in-group; they define its borders and out-groups are constructed. Particularly in the case of strong identification with an in-group (*group cohesiveness*), a result may be *in-group favoritism* and *out-group discrimination* (Turner, Brown, & Tajfel, 1979). Moreover, out-groups are typically perceived as uniform (*out-group homogeneity effect*). The stronger this perception, the more negative the assessment of the out-group, and the more likely it is to be a victim of discrimination (Abelson et al., 1998).

Against this background, it can be argued that the two other characteristics of populism mentioned above—anti-elitism and the exclusion of out-groups—are not just additional features of populism but instead integral parts already implicit in any construction and mention of "the people." As we have seen in our discussion about the different meanings of "the people," the term will almost always (at least implicitly) contrast with another social category or group. In this light, the different types of populism differ in two ways. Firstly, they differ in the explicitness of this social contrast. Thus, although in empty populism the standard for comparison is not explicitly mentioned, it will nevertheless be implicitly included and probably suggested by the communicative context in which the term "the people" is used. If this is true, audience members will have an intuitive idea of who is and who is not "the people" even if the message does not include explicit cues. Leaving open the exact meaning of "the people" can be a clever means of strategic ambiguity. Secondly, the different types of populism differ in their specific out-groups or institutions, which are distinguished from "the people." Some authors propose to differentiate populist messages that focus on *vertical comparisons* between "the people" and political, economic, or cultural elites, established institutions, "the system," or the "mainstream" from populist messages that focus on *horizontal comparisons* between "the

people" and non-elite groups like ethnic, religious, or sexual minorities. Others point out that when we take into account the populist perspective on these comparisons, it might be more pertinent to refer to *upward-oriented* versus *downward-oriented* social comparisons, because out-groups are usually regarded as inferior to "the people."

Anti-elitism and exclusion of out-groups can therefore be regarded as functional equivalents that make explicit the standard to which "the people" are contrasted and that contribute to strengthening identification with the in-group. Consequently, it comes as no surprise that discussions of the concept of "the people," such as the one above, necessarily include descriptions of who or what does not belong to "the people." Basically, the groups, actors, or institutions that populists focus on are perceived by them as responsible for the perceived threats and problems, or, in a lot of cases, serve as scapegoats.

Toward a Heuristic Model for the Analysis of Populist Political Communication

In the remaining section of this chapter, we present a preliminary model of the causes, forms, and effects of populist political communication, which can be used as a heuristic for the national literature investigations in the coming chapters. This model sketches some of the key elements that have to be taken into account when trying to fully understand populist political communication across European countries. The four key elements are located on three levels of social analysis (Figure 2.2): (a) Structural and situational contexts on the macro-level, (b) parties, movements, and their representatives on the meso-level, (c) journalistic and social media on the meso-level, and (d) individual citizens on the micro-level.

Populist political communication can be understood as a process that is embedded in structural and situational macro-level factors. These contextual factors include, on the one hand, more stable features, such as historical experiences and collective memories, the political culture, and characteristics of the political and media systems. On the other hand, specific, real-world situations related to, among others, the economy, migration, national security, and the makeup of the political market also exert their influence on (populist) political communication. To a greater or lesser degree, structural and situational contexts—if perceived or experienced—have a direct impact on citizens (See Figure 2.2; ①), on established or emerging political actors (②), and on the media (③). For example, citizens might experience changes in their personal financial situations as a result of an economic crisis; politicians and journalistic media will also become aware of such a development. Based on the structural context and their specific interests and political ideologies, political actors might then react with public statements, policy plans, or immediate action, which they might communicate directly to citizens (④) and/or both journalistic and social media (⑤). The media will cover the real-world developments and politicians' actions and statements,

Macro (context)

Structural Factors: e.g., history, political/media system
Situational Factors: e.g., state of the economy, migration, security, size and makeup of the political market

① ② ③

Parties, Movements

Meso (organizations)

④ ⑤

Journalistic Media

⑥

Micro (citizens)

Interaction of *citizen predispositions*
(e.g., nativism, authoritarianism)
with *direct experiences* (e.g., personal economic
situation, contact with migrants)
and *messages from politics and media*
(i.e.,"the people", "anti-elitism, "anti–out-group")

⑦

⑬

Parties, Movements

⑪ ⑫

Journalistic Media

⑧ ⑨ ⑩

Consequences for citizens'
- *reality perceptions* (e.g., economy, migrants),
- *emotions* (e.g., self, ingroup, elite, out-group),
- *perceptions of social identity*
- *attitudes* (e.g., groups, issues, democracy)
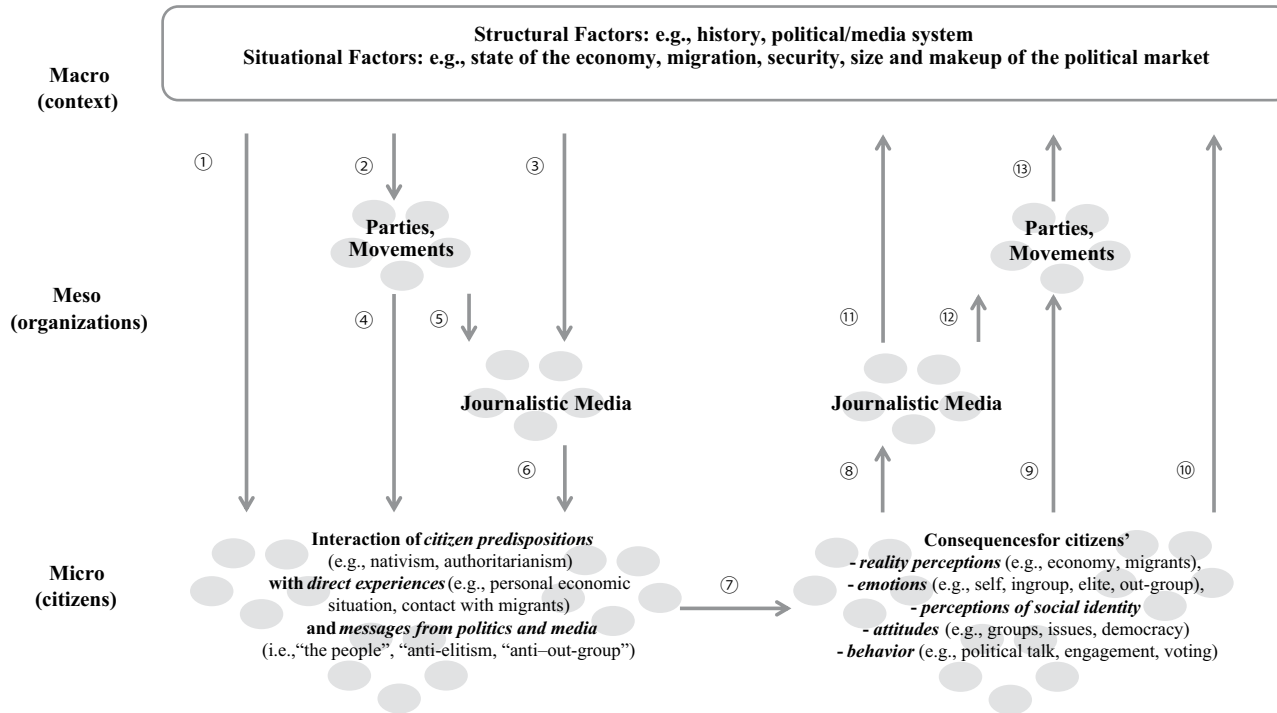- *behavior* (e.g., political talk, engagement, voting)

Figure 2.2 A heuristic model for the analysis of populist political communication.

and may use populism's key elements in their messages (⑥). In fact, for citizens, media coverage is typically by far the most important source of information about real-world situations and politicians, with social media gaining in importance only recently. Based on direct and mediated experiences as well as personal predispositions, the populist or non-populist messages of politicians and the media might then produce certain outcomes (⑦), including reality perceptions regarding the state of the country (e.g., the future development of the economy), positive or negative emotions (e.g., toward one's self, "the people," the elite, or out-groups), relevant aspects of social identity (e.g., human, democrat, Christian, German), attitudes (e.g., regarding policy plans, the in-group, out-groups, the elites), and behavioral consequences (e.g., online and offline political talk, political offline and online engagement, voting).

These various reactions of citizens are not without consequence. Letters to editors and user comments will be perceived by the media (⑧). Political actors will be contacted by citizens, will read the news, and will receive the results of public opinion polls (⑨). And citizens might also affect contextual circumstances directly through political engagement (⑩). Change might also come through media coverage and citizen communication becoming public in social media (⑪). Typically, however, media coverage of real-world developments and citizen discourse in social media will more indirectly affect the real world via its influence on political actors (⑫), who can directly influence political developments and whose policies can (at best) change structural and situational circumstances (⑬).

From this heuristic model, many research questions can be deduced that have not been systematically asked and answered by prior research. For example, the model highlights the crucial role of journalistic media as intermediaries covering both political action and real-world developments. In addition, it alerts us to the necessity to look at the various sources of information that might have an impact on citizens' perceptions of social reality and to the various outcomes that populist political communication might produce. The reader may come up with many more questions based on this model.

Conclusion

This chapter looked at the phenomenon of populist political communication from a theoretical point of view to prepare the ground for the following chapters (Parts II–IV) that review specific countries. In line with other scholars in the field, we argued that communicative processes are crucial to understanding the successes and failures of populist political actors and populist messages across European countries. Although we find a great variety of definitions and definitional criteria in the literature on populism, consensus seems to be growing that references to, or the communicative construction of, "the people" should be regarded as the key component of populist messages, with anti-elitism and anti–out-group stances serving as

optional additional elements. These elements can be combined in various ways, resulting in different types of populism. Including more criteria in our definition of populism could prevent us from focusing on and explaining the essence of populist communication. In addition, it would endanger our goal of including in our analysis a variety of countries, political actors and parties, and communication channels. Constructing an in-group of "the people" or appealing to citizens' identity as part of "the people" lies at the heart of populist political communication. Since "the people" is a notoriously vague term, it can have different kinds of connotations and thus different kinds of meanings, which are either explicitly apparent in populist messages or constructed during the process of reception by audiences (e.g., the people as sovereign, as a class, as an ethnic group, as a nation, as ordinary people). Furthermore, populism can be regarded as illiberal because its representatives support the pure rule of the majority, oppose intermediaries and open political discourse, and favor the idea of a homogeneous society. Against this backdrop, questions of social identity seem to be crucial roots of populism. Moreover, the additional elements mentioned above—anti-elite and anti–out-group messages—can be regarded as functional equivalents that define the standard to which "the people" ("we") are contrasted, strengthen individual identification with the in-group, foster in-group favoritism, and contribute to self-enhancement, reducing self-uncertainty. Finally, we developed and briefly discussed a heuristic, multi-level model that identifies various processes and relationships in populist political communication. It can be seen as the first step in a research program that identifies blind spots but also maps out the areas that we know a lot about.

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Part II

Populist Political Communication in Northern Europe

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3 Denmark

The Rise of the Danish People's Party

Christian Martin Bächler
and David Nicolas Hopmann

Introduction

In the 2015 elections to the Folketing (Danish Parliament), the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party (DF) received roughly 21% of the vote, rendering it the second-largest parliamentary party after the Social Democrats and the largest party in the non-socialist political bloc, the so-called blue bloc.

Danish research on populism focuses primarily on the DF. In this chapter, we will therefore discuss in what ways one can conceive of the DF as a populist party and what factors can explain the party's dominant position in the blue bloc 20 years after its launch. In 1995, the party was founded by a group of politicians who had originally been active in the Progress Party, which will also be discussed in this chapter. A fair amount is known about these populist parties, their communication styles, and their typical voters, as well as the conditions for populism in Denmark. Research, however, becomes less extensive on populist political communication in relation to the media and the public.

Research on Populism in Denmark

Similar to those in other countries covered in this book, researchers on populism in Denmark did not have recourse to a single, universal definition of populism. Most of the reviewed literature only briefly mentions the characteristics of populism, but some texts go further and explicitly discuss the concept. To elaborate on all definitions would be beyond the scope of this chapter. However, Klages (2003) defined populist movements as representing "the ordinary citizen" and having an anti-elitist reasoning. Based on a discussion of theorists such as Taggart, Betz, and Immerfall, the author defined communication by populist actors as characterized by negative argumentation and attention to issues that, according to the populists, no other actors politicize. Considering the communication style, Lund argued that right-wing populism states things in an acceptable manner but implicitly means them in an ugly manner (2003, p. 221). Widfeldt (2000) stated that many definitions of populist and extreme right-wing parties are often normatively loaded. In his discussion of recent trends in Scandinavia, Widfeldt followed Taggart's understanding of *new populism* and defined what he

called populist right parties as being led by charismatic leaders, appealing to the ordinary man, and representing political ideas leaning to the right—in particular those to do with the economy but also those concerned with culture, including immigration (Widfeldt, 2000, pp. 487–488). Not all researchers found this more ideological aspect of new populism relevant. Observing populist parties in Scandinavia, Southwell and Lindgren (2013), for instance, argued that "most of these parties do not fit conveniently into a left-right political spectrum" (p. 128). Accordingly, right-wing ideas are not by themselves part of populism's definition. This observation fits in with Klages's definition. She noted that populist actors address issues that the public regards as important and gives examples of policy positions that are not exclusively right wing (Klages, 2003, p. 407), demonstrating that populism cannot be associated with one particular ideology (p. 405).

Looking at these definitions, two things are clear. First, even though these definitions were all applied in a Danish context, they reveal some variation in the understanding of populism, and second, the definitions in some cases do not square fully with Jagers and Walgrave's (2007) three indicators of populism (reference and appeals to the people, anti-elitism, and exclusion of out-groups). In contrast, populism is sometimes defined by its organization (e.g., charismatic leadership), by its "thin" or hollow ideology, or by other elements of populist political communication (e.g., addressing supposedly ignored issues).

That a substantial part of the literature did not elaborate on the concept of populism might be the result of research being empirical rather than theoretical. In part, this empirical research focuses on single case studies (e.g., Southwell & Lindgren, 2013, who examined the DF). Primarily, the research that we reviewed combined the case of the DF with one or more other cases from Denmark or other countries in a comparative perspective. Rydgren (2010), for instance, was one of several researchers who compared Denmark to Sweden, based on populism having greater success in Denmark than in Sweden, despite the countries being relatively similar. In addition to these studies, surveys were often used to determine who votes for populist parties (e.g., Meret & Siim, 2013, p. 86), and content analyses were used to discuss how populist actors communicate (e.g., Vigsø, 2012, who examined DF press releases). The focus on different aspects of populism and the differences in methodological approaches imply that past research on Denmark did not share the same theoretical starting point. Aside from the common subject of populism, the applied theories dealt with topics such as moralism (e.g., Vigsø, 2012), cleavages (e.g., Rydgren, 2010), and journalistic norms (e.g., Jønch-Clausen, 2010), obviously depending on what aspect of populism and populist political communication the research was covering.

In short, research on Danish populism is characterized by different theories and methods, which may be the result of different understandings of the exact nature of populism. Hence, it seems necessary to briefly identify the populist actors in Denmark and the conditions under which they operate.

In general, research on populist actors in Denmark typically began by choosing the DF (and earlier, the Progress Party) as an example of populist parties in Denmark. If these two parties were actually populist was rarely explicitly discussed. In fact, all of the earlier-mentioned indicators by Jagers and Walgrave have been attributed to the DF: reference and appeals to the people (e.g., Klages, 2003, p. 408), exclusion of out-groups (e.g., Boreus, 2010), and anti-elitism both toward domestic (e.g., Dyrberg, 2001) and international elites, such as the European Union (e.g., Jupskås, 2015). Thus, using Jagers and Walgrave's typology, DF members could be classified as *complete populists*.

Not all researchers agree with the above characterization of the DF. For example, Vigsø (2012) argued that the DF is more sales- than market-oriented. That is, the party is trying to sell its policy in the most effective way but is not changing it according to market demands—a factor that he saw as part of the populist approach to politics. In contrast, none of Jagers and Walgrave's three indicators state that parties necessarily have to change their policy according to public opinion. Other authors, such as J. Goul Andersen (2007), refrained from calling the DF populist due to an ambiguity of the term and the party's mobilization of voters across cleavages in mainstream politics. Of course, Jagers and Walgrave's indicators do not preclude a populist party being mainstream or communicating about mainstream issues. The variation in these examples and in most of the literature regarding the DF's classification as populist or not may therefore be due to different understandings of populism.

In addition to the DF and the Progress Party, a few other right-wing actors are sometimes described as populist (Hjarvard, 1999, p. 154; Lund, 2003), but there is not much systematic research about these actors, since most of the research has centered on the DF and the Progress Party. Nonetheless, if we consider only one of the populism indicators, it has been shown that other, non-populist parties also appeal to "the people" in their party manifestos, but they tend to do so in different ways (Jupskås, 2012). Whereas the DF refers to the people in a nativist setting, the extreme left-wing party, the Unity List, refers to the people as a group with few economic and social resources. Referring to the people is not the primary strategy of the Unity List, however. Generally speaking, even though parties other than the DF may have some populist tendencies, populism is not their main communication strategy (see Jupskås, 2012).

The relationship between the two populist parties, the DF and the Progress Party, is extraordinary because the DF started as a split-off from the Progress Party, which has by now left the political scene. Researchers (e.g., Klages, 2003) initially doubted whether the DF would be able to sustain its relatively high and increasing voter support in its newly gained, supportive role to the incumbent government. The DF was in fact able to do so, managing to later increase its number of parliamentary members, as mentioned in the introduction.