

Newsletter

No. 3, July 2017

- Third year achievements
- The Prague Populism Conference
- Stakeholder meeting
- Paris Action Conference
- Training School in Bucharest
- First Action Book: evidence
- Special issue on populist online communication
- Progress reports from the Working Groups
- The members' opinion about the action
- Upcoming events

Third year achievements

There has been a lot of activity among the members of COST Action IS1308 also in our third year. Two main focus areas have guided our work: (I) Systematic sampling of new empirical data based on the instruments developed in year two, and (II) dissemination of knowledge to stakeholders and the wider public.

In November 2016 the Working Groups met in Prague to discuss testing of the instrument and do necessary adjustments before the final empirical sampling through elite interviews (WG1), content analysis (WG2) and survey experiments (WG3) could start. By March 2017, much of the work collecting material was conducted and the working groups were able to agree on a strategy for the next step of the analysis. At the Paris meeting in March 2017, members agreed that we would aim for a final joint book, where each WG delivered 3-4 empirical chapters to an edited book, that would be the final dissemination of the action. The publication strategy and other dissemination plans based on the new empirical data was also discussed.

Much activity in year 3 was related to dissemination and interaction with stakeholders and the wider public based on the knowledge review we gained working on our first joint book. Action members have been participating at a wide range of events all over Europe during the past year to present to politicians, journalists and other interested members what we know and don't know about populist political communication. While most of these meetings took place between individual members and the various stakeholders in their native countries, we also had an important stakeholder interaction when we were invited to hold our Paris 2017 action conference in the French Senate. In year 3 we also began the preparation for our Educational Package, where we will communicate our

work and findings to a younger audience to stimulate awareness and discussion of this important topic.

Other major achievements from year 3 include the publication of a special issue on populist online communication initiated by our Early Stage Researcher Think Tank (*Information, Communication & Society*, volume 20, issue 9). The Training School that was scheduled for year 3 in Bucharest, Romania was organized as planned in May 2017, although organizational changes in COST technically made this into a grant period 4 event. As in previous years, we have also completed a number of Short Term Scientific Missions. We are certainly on schedule as we enter our fourth and last year of the action.



6th COST Meeting, Praha, November 2016

COST Action event at the Prague Populism Conference

The annual Prague Populism Conference (22-23 May 2017), Current Populism in Europe and the Role of the Media, sponsored by the Heinrich Böll Stiftung was organized

in collaboration with COST Action IS 1308. Chaired by Václav Štětka, COST MC member for the Czech Republic, the evening discussion panel “Populism and Media in Central Europe” featured journalists from three Central European countries: Wojciech Przybylski from Visegrad Insight; Ondřej Houska from Hospodářské noviny; and Anna Frenyó, a freelance journalist from Hungary; as well as Ricardo Gutiérrez, General Secretary of the European Federation of Journalists. The debate, which focused on the manifestations of populism in the current political and media context of the Central European region, was opened by a short presentation of the first Action book, *Populist Political Communication in Europe* and centred around the book’s core topics, namely the use of populist communication strategies by political actors, the presence of populist discourses in Central European media, as well as on the growing appeal of populist rhetoric for the voters across the region. The discussion was attended by other conference participants, including the keynote speakers Hanspeter Kriesi (EUI Florence) and Nadia Urbinati (Columbia University, New York).



Prague Populism Conference, May 2017

Stakeholder Meeting

Munich discussion with politicians labelled populists - at least by some

In a packed lecture theatre, in October 2016, several hundred ordinary citizens and students followed a discussion about populism between Oskar Lafontaine,

former head of The Left (Die Linke), Peter Gauweiler (christian democrats, CSU) and Carsten Reinemann (LMU Munich). They controversially debated definitions, causes and effects of the rise of populism. Both politicians have been called populists frequently, but they at times also use the term for themselves. Among other issues the discussion addressed the dangers that might follow from anti-elite, anti-European, anti-refugee, and anti-islam rhetoric. At least one of the discussants agreed that there sometimes is a danger to be carried away in political speech and to say things you regret afterwards.



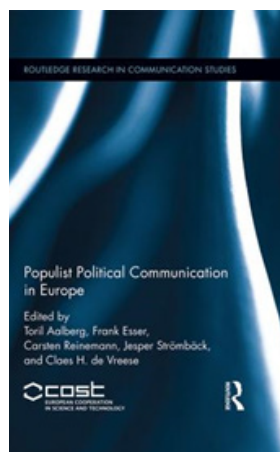
Stakeholder Meeting, Munich, October 2016

Paris Action Conference

Thanks to our wonderful organiser Nicolas Hubé the Friday session of the Action Conference opened in the magnificent surrounds of the Palais du Luxembourg where we were welcomed by the Senat’s Vice-President Françoise Cartro. This was followed by a keynote from Sylvain Crepon, associate professor in political science, Université Francois-Rabelais (Tours), LERAP. Dr Crepon talked about his research on *the new populist speech of Marine Le Pen’s Front National. A break from her father’s FN?*

Dr Crepon put French populism into historical perspective and explained the rise of the FN from a small neo fascist group in 1972 when it adapted constative anti-immigrant anti-globalisation message later part modelled on Geert Wilders. However, it is the nationalist message which remains constant.

relationship between “we, the people” and the elites and outgroups, which are seen as threats against “us, the people” or as responsible for the problems that affect “us, the people”. The literature reviews further shows that real world events such as economic crisis, austerity policies or rising immigration can contribute to the success of populism. On the supply side, new media channels which allow political actors to bypass traditional media facilitate the dissemination of populist ideologies.



With regard to the media-populism relations, five favorable discursive opportunity structures have been detected. A high compatibility of news production logic and populist political logic, politically motivated media ownership (particularly in Eastern Europa), commercially motivated ownership, party issue ownership and a news media environment in which high public distrust and anti-elite sentiments result in increasing support for populism.

A few studies analyzed the characteristics of voters of populist parties in terms of the effects of populist messages. They showed that attitudes such as political distrust or authoritarianism are more important than sociodemographic factors in explaining populist voting. Moreover, subjective reality perceptions are better predictors than objective measures of economic or class situation. Media effect studies analyzed for instance populist anti-immigrants campaign posters and showed that they strengthen intergroup anxiety and stereotypes in majority groups.

All in all, the book identifies various research gaps in terms of the three fields (populist actors, populism and the media, populism effects) and emphasizes the need for more systematic and internationally comparative studies on populist communication.

Special issue on populist online communication

Sven Engesser (University of Zurich), Nayla Fawzi (LMU Munich) and Anders Olof Larsson (Westerdals Oslo School of Arts, Communication and Technology) have guest-edited a special issue of *Information, Communication and Society* (Volume 20, Issue 9) on populist online communication (online first). This issue deals with the question how populist actors may benefit from the Internet. In their introduction, the editors propose a theoretical model on the interplay between populist communication logic and online opportunity structures. The eight papers included in the special issue analyze populist online communication in different regions (Europe, USA, Latin

America) based on multiple methodological approaches. They analyze how political leaders and extreme parties use populist online communication and shed light on how populist movements may relate to various political parties. They finally demonstrate which groups of social media users are susceptible to populism and what effects populist online communication may have on citizens.

Progress reports from the three Working Groups

WG1 Populist actors as communicators

Chair: James Stanyer

Each team is now participating in one of two possible studies and data analysis will be complete by the WG meeting in Sarajevo in November 2017.

Project 1, is an interview based qualitative examination of political communicators perceptions of populism across countries. Field work which 20 countries are taking part in involves interviewing four journalists and four politicians.

Project 2, is a content analysis of social and news media coverage of populism. The code book has been developed and trailed and contains variables for both conventional and social media.

WG2 The media and populism

Chair: Frank Esser

Working Group two has finalised its code book and run a coder training school. Some 12 countries are taking part in the research. The media and time sample have been decided. Coding will be complete in May-September 2017 and a report delivered in Sarajevo.

WG3 Citizens and populism

Chair: Carsten Reinemann

Experimental data has now been collected from each of the 15 participating countries. All data has been standardized and a comparative dataset produced. Initial results show that all manipulations successes and the stimuli were credible. Direct effects were found on stereotypes and blame perceptions but were most consistently demonstrated for the complete populist conditions. Interesting inter-country effects are also present.

Joint WG Output

A possible second book with chapters from each working group is under consideration.

What does COST participation mean to the members?



Karen

The opportunity to discuss and meet other colleagues issues passionate about communication



Michael

To be able to build a network and help develop a research agenda for populism from a comparative perspective



Rosa

Learning a variety of approaches to study populism from different countries and with researchers from different approaches and methodologies



Giuliano

The possibility of meeting many colleagues from European and non-European countries who without COST would never have met. The possibilities for research and study



Susana

Meeting so many interesting people working on the same subject



Lone

A unique opportunity to meet leading people in the field across Europe and to get a really good overview of a rapidly evolving field while doing my PhD



Nicoleta

I have learnt a lot, I will learn a lot



Lenka

It's a great experience. Its very nice to see that we are not isolated and populism not just a problem in one country. It's great to share experience knowledge and perspectives



Tamir

Great topic, great scholars, great networking, you don't need much more than that



COST Meeting, Paris, Amphitheatre Lefebvre, Sorbonne



7th COST Meeting, Paris, March 2017

Upcoming events

WG meetings, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
2-3 November 2017. Practical Information will be available here
<https://www.ntnu.edu/populistcommunication/sarajevo/practical>

Final Meeting with MC and WG meetings and Action conference,
Madrid, Spain, 19-21 March 2018

Social media/contact

Remember our Twitter and Facebook pages:

<https://twitter.com/populistcomm>

<https://www.facebook.com/populistcommunication>

and our brand new YouTube Channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVWPYPLNq9HC2DQhPSfAw0g>

For Action activities, visit the Action website:

<http://www.ntnu.edu/populistcommunication/>

We welcome any updates, publications, blogs or media appearances
on populism.



Action Communication Group

Jane Suiter (Chair)

Nicolas Hubé (Vice-Chair)

Linda Bos

Nayla Fawzi

Action Core Group

Toril Aalberg (Chair)

Claes de Vreese (Vice Chair)

James Stanyer (WG1 Chair)

Frank Esser (WG2 Chair)

Carsten Reinemann (WG3 Chair)

Grant Holder

Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Grant Holder Manager

Karin Ekberg

is1308@svt.ntnu.no

Grant Holder Financial Officer

Rachel Nielsen Lørum