

Sarajevo meeting

Working Group Meetings, 2-3 November 2017 at Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina



COST Action meeting, Sarajevo, November 2017

Action members involved in the coordinated empirical data collection based on the developed research design met in Sarajevo in November 2017 to discuss preliminary findings. The working groups also discussed how to best merge, clean and prepare data for first joint empirical analysis and publications. After two hectic days, participants had agreed on an outline for expected progress, division of labor and contributions to be discussed further at the next and final Action event. A local TV crew attended part of the event and interviewed both the local organizer Nedzma Džananović and Action Chair Toril Aalberg.

Madrid meeting

7th MC Meeting, WG Meetings and Action Conference, 19-21 March 2018 at Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain



COST Action meeting, Madrid, March 2018

Rosa Berganza was the local organizer of the action's last official event that was held in Madrid in March 2018. 65 action members traveled to Madrid to participate in what became a very hectic, interesting and productive event. The working groups discussed draft papers that will be developed into book chapters. Discussion also took place on publication and data use policies related to the coordinated empirical material that had been produced. The Action Conference on day two was a day packed with new insights from keynotes to panel presentations. After the academic

program was finished for the day, the local organizer had organized interesting and thematically highly relevant sight-seeing opportunities including a visit to the Spanish Senate. The MC expressed their satisfaction with the progress of the action. In the summary session of the event on March 21st, several participants made sure to use the opportunity to acknowledge how important the action had been not only for their improved academic work and increased international contacts, but also how it had helped establishing new and significant contacts and collaboration within countries.

Madrid keynote by Pippa Norris

A highlight was a keynote lecture, "The rise of authoritarian populism" by Pippa Norris, a comparative political scientist who has taught at Harvard for more than 25 years. The COST Action were delighted that the ARC Laureate Fellow and Professor of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, the Paul F. McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and Director of the Electoral Integrity Project, could join us even if virtually.

Norris outlined her new book with Ronald Inglehart: *Cultural Backlash: the rise of authoritarian populism*, concentrating on many of the countries at the centre of COST network: Switzerland, Greece, Italy, Hungary, Austria and Sweden.

The danger, according to Norris, is that populism undermines public confidence in the legitimacy of liberal democracy while authoritarianism actively corrodes its principles and practices. The lecture set out a theory explaining polarization over the cultural cleavage dividing social liberals and social conservatives in the electorates and how these values translate into support for Authoritarian-Populist parties and leaders in the US and Europe. Built on 100 point authoritarian scales they predict the values which predict an authoritarian vote on both the left and the right in different countries. In conclusion, she highlighted the dangers to liberal democracy arising from these developments.



Skype keynote presentation by Pippa Norris

Stakeholder round table

The Madrid Stakeholder Round Table: “Politics in an age of populist communication: a view from Spain” gave action members an opportunity to discuss populism in Spain with local journalists and politicians. Moderated by Action Member Karen Sanders, Luis Arroyo, Oriol Bartomeus and Jorge San Miguel discussed how they saw populism has the consequences of structural changes in national politics and the economic crisis. The participants argued that the first change came with the end of the post-dictatory consensus, when a new cleavage was born linked to identity. Jorge San Miguel insisted that parties like Podemos can’t make a choice between “better pension or better economy”. Oriol Bartomeus added that “economy isn’t any more at the center of the conflicts” but that it is now all about identity. The big advantage with identity he stressed is that “you do not have to negotiate” or find a consensual position. A third factor, Luis Arroyo argued, is the crisis of authority and legitimacy, e.g. the “virtuous people vs. the corrupted elite”. New parties give the impression that in this time of a broken change, liberal democracy and traditional institutions do not work anymore. The Spanish paradox is that this populism is implemented in the name of democracy. Many believe the use of simplification – direct and participative democracy is the solution.

All three experts also reminded the audience that this new situation is not only the results of Podemos or the independent parties, but that it has also been initiated by the traditional parties in Spanish politics. A populist communication strategy has been used for years by all parties in order to win elections.



Stakeholder round table

Reports from the three Working Groups

WG1 Populist actors as communicators

Chair: James Stanyer

Working Group 1 had a productive meeting in Madrid. The workshop activities were focused on preparing two chapters based on research for the forthcoming edited collection on populist political communication. The two chapters examine politicians and journalists perceptions of populism across countries. Attendees provided feedback on these book chapters that had been circulated ahead of the meeting. The Working Group agreed on a number of technical, publication and authorship issues ahead of the further round of drafting. In addition, the Working Group discussed future publication ideas. A number of small teams were formed to explore these various ideas in more detail.

WG2 The media and populism

Chair: Frank Esser

The work of WG 2 currently revolves exclusively around the completion of three book chapters, which we contribute to the second COST book. All chapters are based on a quantitative content analysis of populist communication in leading newspapers from 12 countries at two points in time, namely spring 2016 and 2017. The first chapter discusses our theoretical approach to explain populism in political news. It also provides an overview of how often journalists in 12 Western and Eastern European countries use “people-centrism”, “anti-elitism”, “popular sovereignty” and “exclusion” in their reporting. Chapter two examines which explanatory factors can be held responsible for different intensities of populism coverage. The third chapter of our work group deals with the development of populism coverage over time from 2016 to 2017. Beyond these three book chapters, further analyses in future publications are possible in principle, for example with regard to a comparison between left- and right-wing politicians.

WG 3 Citizens and populism

Chair: Carsten Reinemann

In the previous newsletter it was reported that WG3 had finalized the data collection of a 16-country comparative experiment, testing the impact of different populist messages on citizens. This enormous endeavor has resulted in a dataset with a total of 17,597 cases. In the fourth and final year the members of WG3 have been busy cleaning and analyzing the data and working on papers presenting the results. Thus far, based on these data, two papers have been submitted to journals, and two chapters are in preparation for the upcoming book. Overall, the first results indicate that exposure to populist messages can have effects on blame attributions, stereotypes and attitudes, as well as persuade and mobilize voters. However, results are depen-

dent upon the type of populist message, citizen characteristics, and country context. In addition, a theoretical chapter is currently drafted, explicating the theoretical framework on populist political communication effects on citizens. WG3 concluded the final COST meeting in Madrid with the hope of further collaboration in the future, both by making additional use of the collected comparative experimental data, but also in other ways and projects.

Special issue on populist political communication

The International Journal of Press/Politics selected a proposal from the COST Action for a special issue on populist political communication. The interest in the special issue was overwhelming with more than 70 submissions from across the globe. A selection of proposals was made in fall 2017 and these proposals were developed into full papers which were presented at the Action conference in Madrid 2018. On the basis of peer review, a sub selection of these will be included in the actual special issue. The special issue will also include an Introduction article by the COST action core group in which the scope of the special issue and a future, comparative research agenda is discussed. It was exciting to see the amount and the quality of the proposals and it suggests how vibrant and important the theme is in the global research community.



COST Action IS1308: Core group

COST Action, Book 2

With the first book produced by our COST Action we took an important step towards understanding the role of the media and communication in the success of populism across multiple national contexts. *Populist Political Communication in Europe*, published in 2017 by Routledge, provided a comprehensive overview of relevant national and international research across 24 countries, developed a theoretical framework for the analysis of populist political communication and identified key questions for future studies.

The members of this COST Action are now following up with a second book, "Communicating populism. Comparing interactions between politicians, media, and citizens across

Europe", that will answer several of those key questions based on new and innovative research. "Communicating populism", scheduled to be published by Routledge in 2019, will present findings from several large-scale internationally comparative empirical studies focusing on three areas within the context of populism and populist political communication, namely: (a) politicians' and journalists' perceptions of populist communication, (b) media coverage of populism and (c) the effects of populist communication on citizens. The studies are based on comparative interview studies with journalists and politicians, a large-scale comparative content analysis, and a comparative cross-country experiment using nationally representative online-surveys. The book will mark the conclusion of four years of successful work in this COST Action that has brought together so many researchers, put a spotlight on the importance of populist political communication and has laid the groundwork for future research.

An interview with the COST Science Officer

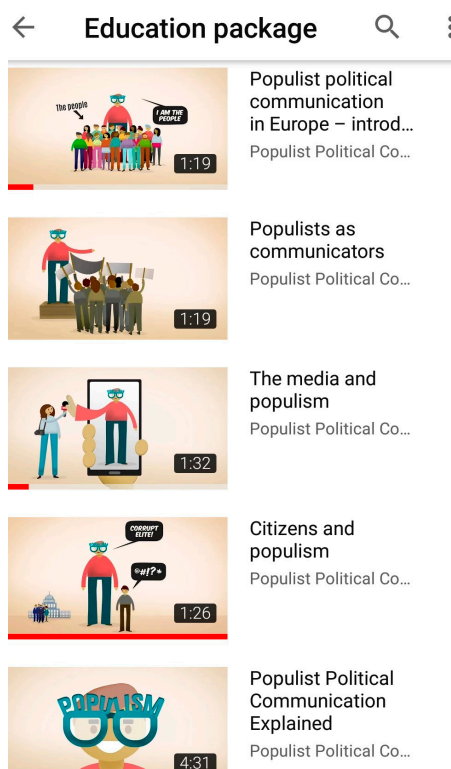
COST Science Officer Rossella Magli attended the final meeting in Madrid. Ms. Magli professed herself delighted with the COST Action: "I am particularly impressed by the timeliness of the Action and its substantial real world engagement and interaction with a wide variety of stakeholders," she says. The Science Officer stresses that it is a priority of COST to engage with younger scholars and those from outside the centre and west of Europe. Therefore she also expresses how delighted she has been to see so many people from a wide variety of countries and across the age and professional development spectrum. Ms. Magli also expresses a strong enthusiasm for the work the Action has conducted over the years: "I am so impressed with the range of outputs and large numbers of members who attended regularly, this has clearly been a very well organized and successful action." Ms. Magli encourages anyone who has an idea for a new COST Action to get involved in bids. The next one of which is in December 2018.



COST Science Officer Rossella Magli (photo: Shervin Najafian)

Education package

In year four, we completed the work and production of our education package, which consist of material to be used in high school curricula, as part of social science classes. This package includes several short videos that offer an accessible and comprehensive introduction to this phenomenon, which is aimed for educators and young citizens and which can be used free of charge for all. The videos are meant to be used as a basis for discussion in class, or as a high quality source in a school project, and each video includes relevant questions that may be discussed in class. The videos are available on our YouTube Channel and webpage, and are shared via social media such as Facebook and Twitter. The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission awarded the EU4FACTS video award in September 2017 to the action in acknowledgement of our outreach efforts and the content, quality and clarity of the video.



Education package: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=3&v=6StmAvF7gHU

Social media/contact

Remember our Twitter and Facebook pages:

<https://twitter.com/populistcomm>

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

and our YouTube Channel:

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

For Action activities, visit the Action website:

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



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