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5. Norway. Populism From Anti-Tax Movement to Government Party

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Introduction

Norwegian research on populism and populist political communication has predominantly been related to the Progress Party (FrP). Although most Norwegian scholars tend to agree that the party should be categorized as a populist party, the use of the term *populist* and *populism* has varied significantly in both the scholarly literature and the public debate. An illustrative example of the fluctuating use of the concept is provided by Jensen, the current FrP leader, who declared that she was "proud to be the leader of a populist party" in 2007 but clearly did not want the party to be classified as populist in 2013 (Lode, 2013). Recently, however, and within the academic field, most scholars have started to agree on a set of indicators for categorizing populism and populist actors. These authors often draw upon the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2 in this volume and generally agree that populist actors present themselves as the voice of the people, while simultaneously criticizing the elite for having betrayed the democratic principle of popular sovereignty.

Research on Populism in Norway

Scholarly work on populism in Norway has tended to focus on the country's most significant populist political phenomenon during the past 40 years—the FrP. As in the more comparatively oriented literature, only a few authors define and discuss the concept. Despite, or perhaps due to, the scant literature, there are several different definitions of populism in the scholarly community, let alone in the public debate. While some scholars see populism primarily as a "thin" ideology (sometimes including additional characteristic features such as non-existent organizational structure or limited programmatic profile), others see populism as a style, a distinct kind of democratic regime, or even related to specific motivations of voters. Svasand (1998, pp. 79–80), for example, connects populism to voter motivations, arguing that populist voters are mobilized on the basis of a general mistrust toward the political system and that they are united only with regard to this abstract feeling of being in opposition to the current elites. In the public debate, the concept of populism is often conflated with allegedly "irresponsible" vote-seeking strategies or opportunism.

The Norwegian political science dictionary defines populism as a specific political doctrine, which holds that public policy should reflect the will (attitudes as well as instincts) of the people. Furthermore, populism is associated with an unmediated relationship between the charismatic leader and the people, and with anti-institutionalization and anti-hierarchal organizational patterns (Grindheim, 2007, pp. 223–224). On the basis of an extensive review of the history of ideas, Strand (2003) argues similarly that a populist movement should mobilize the masses rather than the elites, that it should hold a catchall rather than class-based appeal, and that one may also speak of a populist regime, in which ordinary people exert extensive influence on political decision-making processes. Strand makes an interesting distinction between "elitist populists" and what might be called "ordinary populists," based on his readings of Latin-American populism.

Goul Andersen and Bjorklund (2000 distinguish between populist *style* and populist *ideology*. The notion of a populist style refers to no less than ten indicators: radical statements, organizational type, illiberalism, illegal behavior, conspiratorial views, aggressive or passionate language, distaste for political compromise, appeal to the people, preference for direct democracy, and disregard for political correctness. The notion of a distinct populist ideology is based upon Lipset's theory of fascism and the mobilization of the petty bourgeoisie. According to this theoretical framework, populism combines anti-modernization, nationalism, and anti-capitalism. Not surprisingly, when populism is conceptualized in this way, the FrP—the most wellknown populist party in Norway—does not turn out to be very populist.

More recent research on populist parties lies within the Canovan-Taggart-Mudde framework (e.g., Bjorklund, 2004; Jupskas, 2015). According to these analyses, populism is first and foremost a nostalgic ("thin") ideology in which the homogenous, hard-working, and reasonable people have become subjugated and exploited by the power-seeking and unreliable elite. In order to counteract the influence of the elites, populists usually demand increased use of referendums (Bjorklund, 2004, p. 413). This is also the case with the FrP. In fact, the populist preference for referendums has even been used to explain why members of the FrP are more voter-oriented and more in favor of direct democracy (Hansen & Saglie, 2005, p. 21).

Furthermore, within the most common conceptual framework, populism is seen as having a chameleonic quality. More specifically, the thinness of populism allows it to be merged with other, thicker ideologies or salient cleavages, producing different kinds of populism, including neoliberal populism, periphery populism, regional populism, national populism, socialist populism, conservative populism, and, finally, the undemocratic version—namely, fascist populism (Jupskas, 2013c, p. 269).

In terms of research design, the literature on populist parties contains both single-case studies and comparative studies. Most of the comparative analyses compare aspects of the right-wing populist party in Norway with similar parties in Denmark (e.g., Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000), Sweden (e.g., Svasand & Wörlund, 2005), the Nordic region as a whole (e.g., Jungar & Jupskas, 2014; Svasand, 1998), Slovakia (e.g., Jupskas & Gyárfášová, 2012), or Western Europe (e.g., Art, 2011).

Most, if not all, of the literature on populism is empirically oriented, focusing on the only right-wing populist party in Norway, FrP. To be sure, not all FrP representatives could be considered populist, and populism (as either a thin ideology or style) is not restricted to the representatives from the FrP. Yet, the FrP is still perceived to be the only populist party in Norway. The literature thus includes analyses of this party's ideology, organization and leadership, rhetoric, transnational linkages, relationship with civil society, and voter characteristics (e.g., Downs, 2001; Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000; Harmel & Svasand, 1997; Holje, 2008; Jungar & Jupskas, 2014; Jupskas, 2015; H. Mjelde, 2013; Simonnes, 2013; Svasand & Wörlund, 2005). Some literature is also concerned with the structural and contextual conditions for electoral success (Bjorklund, 2007; Kestilä & Söderlund, 2007), with how the party's discourse on immigration policies has resulted in a moral distinction between the "decent" and "indecent" parties (Hagelund, 2003, 2005), and with mainstream reactions in general (Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, & Sitter, 2010; Downs, 2001).

Only one contribution briefly discusses the relationship between populism and democracy, arguing that populism may function as a corrective to idolization of authority, technocracy, and inattentive politicians (Bjorklund, 2004, p. 419).

In Norway, populism as a concept was initially used to describe Populist Work Groups and the political strategies suggested by the social researcher Ottar Brox (1972). Populist Work Groups could perhaps be best described as a group of intellectuals, whose activity was primarily restricted to the early 1970s. Ideologically, Populist Work Groups were antiestablishment oriented, anti–European Community, and against the ongoing centralization of production and power (Bjorklund, 2004). Moreover, the movement, which had some intellectual influence in the Socialist Left Party, was highly concerned with ecological issues (Aarsaether, Oltedal & Heen, 2009).

In recent years, however, populism has been almost exclusively associated with the FrP. In contrast to Populist Work Groups, the FrP combined populism with a right-wing ideology. It emerged as an anti-tax protest movement in 1973 but remained electorally marginal until the late 1980s when a more vocal anti-immigration rhetoric was adopted. In 2009, anti-immigration was by far the most important issue for the party's parliamentary candidates (Jupskas, 2013a). In the 1990s, the platform was further expanded with welfare issues (most notably, geriatric care and health care) (Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000), and the party gradually increased its share of the popular vote from 15% in 1997 to 23% in 2009. In the most recent general election of 2013, the support decreased to 16%, but the party nevertheless entered government for the first time as a junior partner in a minority coalition with the Conservative Party. So far, government participation has caused further electoral decline, leading to a poll standing of below 12% in 2015.

According to different typologies of populism, the FrP has usually been classified as *neoliberal populist* rather than *national populist*, even if xenophobia is at the core of the party's ideology. However, following the typology proposed by Jagers and Walgrave (2007; see Chapter 2 in this volume), the party also fits the category of *complete populism*; not only does the party frequently portray itself as the sole defender of the "common people," it also criticizes the elites (i.e., political, bureaucratic, cultural, and media elites) and excludes various out-groups from the national community (i.e., asylum seekers, Roma, Muslims). The content and intensity of the exclusionary rhetoric seem to depend on the political and societal context (e.g., Jupskas, 2015).

The rise of the FrP has been explained by a variety of different factors, including the supply side, the demand side, and political opportunity structures. And even if comparative research has demonstrated that the FrP is not a typical populist radical right party—being more economically liberal, less authoritarian, and less transnationally connected to other populist radical right parties (Jungar & Jupskas, 2014)—most of the explanatory factors should be familiar to those working with the radical right. As regards favorable structural conditions, scholars have explained the party by pointing to basic changes in society's post-industrial cleavage structure and the deterioration of working-class organization (Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000); to the emergence of an educational cleavage, immigration, and the increased saliency of the immigration issue (e.g., Kestilä & Söderlund, 2007); and to an erosion of former counter-cultures (Bjorklund, 2007). Moreover, in line with the general literature, the FrP does not benefit electorally from the increasing unemployment rate or from fear of an economic crisis, even if the party has been somewhat overrepresented among unemployed voters (Bjorklund, 2007; Jupskas, 2015).

By and large, the political opportunity structures have been advantageous for the FrP, especially at the local level (Kestilä & Söderlund, 2007). On the one hand, the party has benefited from the existence of a moderate mainstream right competitor (Bilstad, 1994), the tabloidization of mass media (Johansen, 2001; see also Svasand & Wörlund, 2005), positive coverage on key issues (I. Mjelde, 2007), and strengthening of linkages with organizations in civil society (E. H. Allern, 2013; Jupskas, 2015). On the other hand, the party has been massively criticized by civil society, including the Church (Haugen, 2014) and trade unions (Flote, 2008).

Regarding the internal supply side, the FrP has been anti-establishment rather than antisystemic (Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000), and the anti-immigration position has been presented within a "new master frame" based on the notion of immigrants being an economic burden or cultural threat rather than biologically inferior (Jupskas, 2015). Moreover, having been founded as an anti-tax movement, the FrP has had a strong "reputational shield," enabling the party to fend off most accusations of racism (Ivarsflaten, 2006). More recently, the party has become the most important and influential anti-Islamic actor on the political scene (Berntzen & Sandberg, 2014). In contrast to many other populist radical right parties, the FrP has remained right-wing oriented in economic policies (e.g., taxation, deregulation, and privatization). Yet due to significant income from the oil industry, the party has argued that strong right-wing policies could be easily combined with strengthened welfare arrangements, particularly for the elderly. The unexpected electoral persistence of the party has also been explained by skillful leadership (Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000, pp. 196– 197) and the development of an organizational model combining the traditional mass party with the structure of the "business firm" party (Bjorklund, 2003; H. Mjelde, 2013). The latter metaphor refers not only to the powerful position of the party elite vis-a-vis the grass roots but also to the permanent struggle for media attention (Heidar & Saglie, 2002; Jupskas, 2013b), to the focus on issues and personalities (Karlsen & Narud, 2004), and to the comprehensive usage of external campaign expertise (Karlsen, 2010).

Populist Actors as Communicators

Norwegian scholars have written a lot on whether leaders of populist parties differ from leaders of other parties in terms of charisma and communication skills, although solid empirical research on this topic is not quite so abundant. A few empirical exceptions should be mentioned, however. Bjorklund (2004), for example, attributes a lot of the FrP's success to the communication style of the party leaders, arguing that Hagen has repeatedly demonstrated effective rhetorical skills, including double communication and the use of unarticulated conclusions, which allow the followers to draw conclusions according to their own prejudices. Jensen's rhetorical skills seem similar to those of Hagen in the sense that she tends to be vague, ambiguous, and non-specific in her argumentation (Sigurdsen, 2014). Moreover, descriptive analyses of external and internal popularity of the party leaders suggest that both Hagen and Jensen, to a larger extent than other party leaders, have been highly controversial externally yet strongly admired among core followers, partly because they are portrayed as unafraid, honest, and responsive (Jupskas, 2015). In a study of the 2001 election campaign, for instance, Hagen's popularity had a larger impact on the FrP's popularity than did any other leader's personal appeal on his or her respective party (Jenssen & Aalberg, 2006, p. 257).

There is not a lot of systematic knowledge in Norway on whether political actors use different styles, strategies, and language (i.e., populist vs. non-populist) when approaching different

media. However, in a quantitative content analysis of TV2 (a commercial TV station) and NRK (public radio and TV broadcasting stations), Lundh (2014) explicitly examines the use of populist communication styles by the various Norwegian political parties. Her results show that the FrP's style is the most populist, both in terms of *thin populism* (appeals to the people) and *thick populism* (anti-establishment and exclusion of certain segments of the population). The Conservative Party (H), the Christian Democratic Party (KrF) and the Socialist Left Party (SV) also appeal to the people but are much less anti-establishment and less exclusionist toward immigrants. The Labor Party (Ap) and the Liberal Party (V) use very little populist communication. Contrary to some of the previous studies, however, and her theoretical expectations, the data show very little variation in the amount of populist appeals in the commercial versus the public broadcast news.

Furthermore, a growing body of research has covered the FrP's strategic use of the Internet and social media, particularly during election campaigns. The FrP was one of the last parties to strategically use social media in Norway. Up until the national election in 2009, the FrP was the only party of significance that neglected Web 2.0 applications. Kalnes (2009) explained this avoidance with the FrP's previous election successes in 2001 and 2005; the party lacked the incentive to experiment with communication technology. Moreover, providing information was the FrP's priority rather than encouraging debate and dialogue, and the FrP's general secretary argued that the Web had little effect as a marketing channel to win new voters, since those who were visiting their website already had an interest in the party (Saglie, 2007, p. 13). However, after social media and particularly Facebook matured in Norway, the FrP became one of the most followed Norwegian parties on Facebook (Kalsnes, 2015). The apparent strategy of the party and, in particular, the current party leader, Siv Jensen, is to avoid Twitter and its urban elite, the Twitterati, and rather to focus her activity on the arguably more popular and far-reaching Facebook (Larsson, 2014).

There is little systematic knowledge in Norway as to whether any unique communication strategies and tactics distinguish populist parties from mainstream parties in Norway. A few studies on general party strategies that include both non-populist and populist actors exist, however (see, e.g., Aalberg & Saur, 2007; S. Allern, 2011; Karlsen, 2011; Krogstad, 2004). These studies suggest, for instance, that populist parties (or more radical parties) are more focused on the party leader, have a more self-asserting style, and use more hard, negative political advertisements. Interestingly, earlier research revealed that a top-down culture is heavily emphasized among the FrP leadership (E. H. Allern & Saglie, 2012), but that this emphasis does not indicate that their campaign style is more candidate- than party-oriented compared with other parties (Karlsen & Skogerbo, 2015). Although the FrP comes across as the most top-down controlled party during election campaigns (only surpassed by the Labor Party), FrP candidates themselves describe their party as having rather loosely organized local campaigns. Thus, the leadership's top-down approach does not prevent party candidates from perceiving their campaigns to be rather independent of the central, high-profile campaign. This situation contrasts to the situation of many of the other parties, which clearly have a daily coordination between the central party organization and the regional campaigners (Karlsen & Skogerbo, 2015). The FrP also makes extensive use of external professionals for technical assistance but less so for its campaign strategies, which is a finding common to most of the other Norwegian political parties (Karlsen, 2010).

The Media and Populism

How populist actors and their communicative strategies resonate with journalistic media, and how individual media outlets deal with populist discourse are clearly under-researched areas

of Norwegian political communications. Nevertheless, a few studies argue that contemporary media logic coincides with the populist communication style (Johansen, 2001) and that the largest tabloids are characterized by a combination of populism and more analytical journalism (Eide, 1995, 2001), even if very few journalists seem to vote for the FrP (S. Allern, 2011).

Some evidence is also found in the more thorough empirical content analysis presented by Waldahl, Andersen, and Ronning (1993, 2009). In these studies, the authors demonstrated how one of the major differences between the two main Norwegian broadcasters is the way they frame their news stories. They argued that NRK (the public broadcasting system) is more journalistically neutral, whereas TV2 (the commercial broadcaster) often uses what they called a "populist run-up," creating a "dichotomous consciousness" characterized by an upstairs/downstairs dichotomy. Waldahl et al. reported TV2 saying that those "down here on the floor" are the good people, while "they" (people with power in general) are selfish and privileged exploiters of the system who keep everyone else down (1993, p. 29). The authors in other words were suggesting that the main Norwegian commercial broadcaster has adopted a communication style that is similar to *antielite populism*. In later work, Waldahl et al. (2009) also discussed how a new tendency of populist "citizen journalism" is spreading due to increased competition from other media platforms.

Within the public debate, however, we find arguments stating that TV2 resonates even with complete populism. For example, in the early 2000s, a now Liberal Party MP (Raja, 2004) initiated a major debate on whether or not TV2 promoted "populism" and xenophobia. One of the trigger points of this debate was when a "poll" presented in a TV2 current affairs program declared that 97% of their viewers agreed that "Muslims are a threat to Western values." Most of the sources in the debate that followed were public figures participating in various media outlets, but some empirical research has also suggested that TV2's profile may stress the exclusion of out-groups in addition to its anti-elitism style. For instance, Strabac, Thorbjornsrud, and Jenssen (2012) have suggested that viewers of commercial TV news are more likely to be exposed to news content that is more dominated by the framing of immigration as a threat or a problem. In their empirical study of news exposure and attitudes toward immigration, they found that watching commercial TV is linked to anti-immigration attitudes, whereas the opposite is true for watching public service TV news. In one of their examples, they referred to a newscast aired prior to the 2009 parliamentary election, where in contrast to NRK's more balanced coverage, TV2 generally presented few or no opposing arguments to FrP's anti-out-group utterances (Strabac, Thorbjornsrud, & Jenssen, 2012). Others scholars have also found a clear relationship between the preference for TV2 news and current affairs and support for the FrP and anti-immigrant policies (Karlsen & Aalberg, 2015). This relationship, however, may be equally caused by selective exposure rather than voting preferences and by policy attitudes being a direct effect of watching commercial TV news.

There is also some research on how populist actors and communications resonate in non-journalistic, online media like blogs, forums, and social networks, but there is no systematic knowledge of the reasons for differences in the resonance of populist communications in citizen online discourses. Larsson and Kalsnes (2014), for instance, found that the FrP deliberately uses Facebook over Twitter to reach "ordinary" people. In fact, its current leader, Siv Jensen, is one of the political actors who enjoys among the highest number of Facebook likes and shares of all Norwegian and Swedish politicians. Typically, her most popular posts tend to focus on so-called negative campaigning—critiquing her peers as well

as certain media outlets (elites), who, she claims, misrepresent the agenda championed by herself and her party (representing ordinary people) (Larsson, 2014, p. 11). FrP candidates are generally more likely to use Facebook over Twitter, compared to other parties (Karlsen, 2011, p. 13). While 49% of FrP candidates used Facebook in 2009, only 13% used Twitter (compared to the Labor Party, where the numbers were respectively 55% and 29%). One study found that marginalization of different kinds would lead to a highly active voter base (Larsson, 2014, p. 15). Political actors who are in some way marginalized in the traditional media, like the FrP claims to be, might not be among the most active users of Facebook; they appear, however, comparably more successful, since their posts are shared more than those of the established or mainstream political actors.

Citizens and Populism

Based on the election surveys, we know that the typical FrP voter is male, works in the private sector, is less educated, and more likely to be unemployed (see, e.g., Aardal, 2003; Jupskas, 2013a). When it comes to political geography, the party has gradually moved from the center to the periphery (Bjorklund, 2003). Although the voters have a clear working-class profile, many of these voters do not identify themselves as working class, let alone as social democrats. Oesch (2008) demonstrates how the FrP's strong support among the workering class is partly explained by cultural protectionism and discontent with how democracy works rather than by economic grievances. Not surprisingly, very few among the various elites in society vote for the FrP (Gulbrandsen et al., 2002). The party has been highly successful as regards the mobilization of politically cynical voters and of those who are skeptical of immigration (Ivarsflaten, 2008, pp. 12–15).

On the basis of national election surveys, Aardal (e.g., 2003) has repeatedly observed how the FrP—to a larger extent than other parties, including radical left parties—has been supported by voters who display low levels of trust in the competence and trustworthiness of politicians and in external efficacy (i.e., the responsiveness of parties and representatives). It is important to note, however, that FrP voters are primarily protesting against the political elite rather than against the system (Bergh, 2004). The lack of trust vis-a-vis the established parties could be partly but not completely explained by anti-immigration attitudes and "oil wealth dissatisfaction" (Listhaug, 2007). In this respect, the success of the FrP has had an overall integrating effect, providing a political alternative for disaffected voters (Aardal, 2003).

Initially, the party also mobilized those who were highly critical of the expanding welfare state; since the 1990s, however, the party's position on economic issues has become increasingly ambivalent. While they still want to reduce state intervention and taxes, they support many welfare benefits. That said, the party has successfully politicized a latent moral dimension concerning which groups deserve welfare benefits and public support (Goul Andersen & Bjorklund, 2000, pp. 209–210). FrP voters tend to place themselves to the left of conventional right-wing voters, and recent research has also shown that the voters of the FrP are increasingly loyal to the party and that an increasing number voters identify themselves with the party (Jupskas, 2013a).

The most important issues for FrP's supporters have been immigration, law and order, care for the elderly, and reduced taxes (Jupskas, 2015). Some studies also indicate that FrP voters are among the most active in discussing these issues with allies as well as opponents online (Enjolras, Karlsen, Steen-Johnsen, & Wollebak, 2013). The same study suggested that the most immigration-critical voters (many of them supporters of the FrP) held most of their discussions on social media with their opponents, compared with the immigration liberals,

who tended to discuss mainly with political allies. These most active online debaters also have lower trust in the political system (government, police, bureaucracies) compared with people who discuss less or who are not participating in online debates (Enjolras et al., 2013, p. 147). It is more common for immigration critics who support the FrP to debate on online news site discussion forums and political party websites than on Twitter, which is more dominated by liberals and pro-immigration debaters.

Summary and Recent Developments

This review summarized the existing research on populism and populist communication in Norway. The studies have mostly been empirical and have focused on the organizational or voter aspects of the populist parties. If ideology has been covered, it is for the most part the nativist or nationalist part of the party's message rather than populism. Research on populist actors in the media, the relationship between populist actors and the media, and populism *in* the media is limited. Similarly, very few scholars have carried out any systematic analysis of populist political actors and their messages' effects on citizens. This review has shown that the FrP is the only party that is classified as populist by Norwegian researchers. Starting as an anti-tax movement in the 1970s, the party has gone through some major transitions on its way to its current position as a coalition government party. Its road to power has been characterized, among other things, by strong leadership, by a permanent struggle for media attention, and by comprehensive usage of external campaign expertise.

Two political developments in Norway make the study of contemporary populism particularly interesting. First, the extreme-right terrorist attacks carried out in Oslo and Utoya on July 22, 2011, changed voters' perceptions of, and support for, the FrP. There was reduced overall support for the FrP immediately after the attacks, but also a reduction in its ownership of the immigration issue (Bergh & Bjorklund, 2013, p. 35). Second, when the FrP entered government for the first time in the fall of 2013, it was as the junior partner of a minority governing coalition led by the Conservative Party. At the time of this writing, the FrP heads 7 of 18 ministries, including the party leader who is the minister of finance. Opinion polls and membership figures suggest that the FrP is paying a price for governing while its support is declining. The FrP received 20% fewer votes in this last election. In addition, 27% of party members have left the party since 2011, and 14% have left since the FrP entered the government. Detailed studies about the effects of government participation on, for example, the communication style of the FrP, levels of populism, anti-establishment attitudes, policy, and trust among voters and activists have yet to be carried out and published.

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