Øistein Nygaard Falch

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A quantitative content analysis of populism on social media during the 2021 Norwegian parliamentary election

Master's thesis in Media, Communication and Information Technology
Supervisor: Melanie Magin
June 2022

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Kunnskap for en bedre verden

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ABSTRACT

Populism is historically speaking a term that is messy and filled with controversies. This master thesis has two specific aims: Firstly, to accurately quantify which political party of the 10 in the Norwegian parliament (Storting) used populist rhetoric more actively on social media during the 2021 national election campaign. Second, to analyse to which degree populism may have had a significant role to play during the parties' digital campaigning. The empirical basis is Facebook and Instagram posts from each political party on the Norwegian Storting from August to September 2021 (four weeks before election day to election day September 13th). The main findings were that Rødt was the most populist party during the campaign, while Venstre was the only political party that showed no documented occurrences of populism in their online communication. Other key findings were that Facebook and Instagram did not differ to any significant amount with populism. This study conducted presents complimentary to parties that were most populist in their online communication, also the type of populism they used during their digital campaigning. These findings are relevant because they challenge several of the notions about Norwegian parties and it shows that populism as a communication tool is far more fluid and contextually based than one might intuitively think.

SAMMENDRAG

Populisme er historisk sett et begrep som er rotete og fylt med kontroverser. Denne masteroppgaven har hatt to spesifikke mål. Det første er å kvantifisere hvilket politisk parti av de ti stortingspartiene som mest aktivt bruker populistisk retorikk på sosiale medier. Det andre er å analyse hvorvidt populisme spilte en vesentlig rolle under stortingsvalgkampen. Det empiriske grunnlaget baserer på innlegg fra Facebook og Instagram blant norske stortingspartier fra valgkampen i august til september 2021 (fire uker fra valgdagen, samt valgdagen 13. september). Blant hovedfunnene finner vi at Rødt var det mest populistiske partiet gjennom valgkampen. Venstre var det eneste partiet der det ikke ble funnet et eneste dokumentert tilfelle av populisme i deres innlegg. Andre sentrale funn var at Facebook og Instagram ikke hadde særlig differanse i henhold til populistisk innhold. Masteroppgaven presenterer i tillegg hvilke partier som var mest populistiske i deres digitale kommunikasjon og hvilke populistiske elementer i denne kommunikasjonen som var mest fremtredende under valgkampen. Disse funne er relevante fordi de viser til at populisme som en kommunikasjonsstil er mer flytende og situasjonsbestemt enn hva man intuitivt skulle anta.

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PREFACE

By delivering this thesis, I am fully aware of the risk for this research to be used as political ammunition. Even so, I find the topic both interesting and equally important. I never thought I would find myself in such a privileged position: delivering my master thesis at Norway's finest university. If anyone would've told me that ten years ago, my instant reaction would probably be laughter. A special thanks should go to my parents, who've been great supporters all the way through my education. Another one must go to my class at MKI, for the warm and kind social environment over the last two years. With the thesis itself I send the kindest of regards to my supervisor, Melanie Magin, who always kept faith in me even when my drafts were ridiculously bad, and for giving me enormous insight in quantitative research. Also, I would like to thank PhD-candidate Hedvig Tønnesen, and the rest of the coding team for their contributions to this dataset. Lastly, I would like to thank my girlfriend Vilde for all the loving support and endurance with me the last couple of months – even when the working process was at its toughest.

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of Erling Falch (1939-2021)

Grandpa, island landlord, mentor, and friend.

I was looking forward to showing you the finished thesis. You were so thrilled when visiting me in Trondheim last autumn, and excited about what I'd find when delving into this truly fascinating topic. Unfortunately – due to this brutal pandemic you fell victim to – you'll never be able to read this. In normal circumstances, you would have been with us today. I have honestly never experienced someone at your age be in so good physical shape as you were in your last years. You were perhaps the most influential family member to make me delve into the academic fields of both journalism, media science and political research. For that I am truly grateful. I will never forget the long, interesting (not to mention ridiculously loud) political discussions between us. Although we rarely agreed, it was always insightful, rational intellectual conversations based on mutual respect.

You taught me so much. It is only fair that this one is for you.

«La sjøfaren mann som bølgene pløyer, våger sin trøye på brusende vann.

Sin næring må finne hvert eneste år, så lenge som havet mot klippene slår».

– Hans Lind, Lofotkoralen

1. INTRODUCTION

From the election of Donald Trump in the US, The Five Star Movement in Italy, the BREXIT campaign in the UK, and Marie Le Pen in France. It is safe to say that western democracies have been affected by the rise of populist movements and prominent political figures. While these notorious right-wing politicians or movements often come to mind, populism is very much an unpartisan term.

"When it appears, it does so with a spectacular quality. Populist politicians, movements or parties emerge and grow quickly and gain attention but find it difficult to sustain that momentum and therefore will usually fade fast" (Taggart, 2004. p. 270).

For whatever reason, this tendency of populists fading to obscurity shortly after they are introduced in the mainstream does not seem to be that case anymore, as all of the mentioned movements and politicians have gained footing either in office or in media over time. Populism has for some time been regarded as a buzzword in the political public sphere. Most noticeably on the far right and far left it is often used to brand political opponents (Jenssen, 2021). It is routinely used by journalists and politicians to stigmatize and delegitimize appeals to "the people" against "the elite," often by characterizing such appeals as dangerous, manipulative, and demagogic (Brubaker 2017, p. 359). The populist term has its origin from American political science of the 1950's. (Østerud, 2017, p. 243; Allcock, 1971). There are different interpretations of the term in a political context often depending on geographical origins. 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. Some of the studies do not provide a definition for populism, but instead treat it as a commonplace idea referring to irresponsible vote-seeking strategies or even openly xenophobic rhetoric, while others identify populism with extreme right-wing movements and with historical connections to totalitarian Nazi and Fascist regimes (Herman & Jungar, 2020; Müller, 2016). In Western Europe, one of the key denominators has been populist parties' influence on long-established, mainstream parties (Reinemann et al, 2016, p. 8). One could quite safely say that it is not a brand that anyone seems to embrace in today's political discourse. Yet, almost every politician or party uses it as a rhetorical tool to some extent. In other words: non-populists are not immune to the use of populist tactics (Mudde, 2004). This has always been the case regarding electoral campaigning. Populism is in many ways a necessity, in that regard. In the later years this tool has become

more visible due to the nature of social media. In recent years of the digital era of campaigning, populist tools are more effective and necessary in political campaigns. Further elaborations on that topic will be given in later. Although the concept of populism is as vague as it is controversial, this thesis will try to explore how different political parties in Norway use populism on social media when campaigning. This research is done by using a quantitative content analysis. As Norwegian populism is a somewhat unexplored field this is certainly a relevant topic that could shed some light on the notions of populism in Norway and which parties that use it most actively in their online communication. The overarching research question of this study is: which role populism played on Facebook and Instagram during the 2021 campaign?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

There are numerous theoretical approaches to populism that are necessary to cover in this chapter. Firstly, we will need to cover and define the term 'populism', how it is used, understood, how it works – either in power or in opposition – and lastly how it relates to social media systems. Secondly, it is essential to showcase relevant literature about how populist rhetoric fits with digitalization in the context of political campaigning, mainly social media (Instagram and Facebook) and how populist rhetoric applies in digital spaces. The academic literature used in this thesis is focused on how political actors utilize populism, although theory on traditional legacy media channels, explaining how populists use the media to get their message across would be just as valid. This aspect of media theory could just as well have been implemented to a greater extent, but is not due to necessary restrictions of the thesis.

2.1 WHAT IS POPULISM?

Firstly, there are numerous controversies regarding populism and recent studies of the phenomenon. The main issue is that populism has been branded as dangerous and de-legitimized for such a long time. When used it is either not defined or defined in different ways. The two most common misconceptions of populism are 1) it is irrational and solely based on emotions or the gut-feeling, and 2) it is opportunistic and simplistic by design, aiming for quick or easy solutions to complex problems, like promising massive tax reductions close to an election (Mudde, 2004).   Therefore, it is of utmost importance that this chapter deals with the term rationally. Firstly, there is nothing wrong with populism in principle. It is neither a negative nor positive feature in the political sphere. It is simply put, as most ideologies when dissected – neutral. As stated by Bjørklund (2004) "based on a minimum common multiple, populism cannot be dismissed as a purely negative phenomenon. A positive feature is the absence of an unwarranted respect for the elite, the lack of immediate acceptance of what the experts say and think and the protest towards an intricate and technocratic language that cultivates the complicated and disregards the popular" (Bjørklund, 2004, p. 419). Populism, in essence, is a form of moral politics, as the clear distinction between the 'elite' and 'the people' is first and foremost moral (i.e pure vs corrupt), not situational, socio-cultural (e.g. ethnicity, religion),or socio-economic (e.g. class) (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 8). In the context of populist leaders, they symptomatically displays four interrelated—and mutually reinforcing—

characteristics: 1) a reliance on extraordinary charismatic leadership; 2) a strategic pursuit of political polarization; 3) a drive to seize control of the state, emasculate liberal institutions, and impose an illiberal constitution; and 4) the systematic use of patronage to reward supporters and crowd out the opposition (Pappas, 2019, p. 71). Although the everyday use of the term 'populism' is mostly negative, the term itself is neutral in the great scheme of things. Several movements over the course of history that have been populist have forced change due to the paradigm shift of their thin ideology. It is therefore important to clarify; this study does in no way, shape or form suggest that high frequency of populism within a political party = negative, and likewise that a low frequency = positive.

Aalberg & de Vreese (2017) notes that many of the key shortcomings in previous literature can be grouped into several challenges. Defining populist political actors and communication, and to determine communication success is one problem due to uneven measurement between studies. Populism is defined as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the '*volonté générale*' (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). These are also the three main dimensions of populism and are crucial to this study. Political elites are not necessarily reduced to only actors in power, like the government. An oppositional party, for instance, can just as well be considered an elite. Rather than judicial or political power, the 'elites' in these cases are more ideological. The power they behold, as elites, are more of political influence than power of office. If not clarified, this potentially gives the Norwegian parties on the left (all of them being in opposition as of 2021) a huge disadvantage when measuring calls to resist ideas of 'the elite'. Just about every party has different 'elites' they are obviously exaggerating about in their negative campaigning. From the "welfare profiteers" as an elite often highlighted on the left to the "dangerous radical socialist" being either an elite or dangerous others from a right-populist perspective. As pointed out by Jenssen (2021) a phrase of '*volonté générale*' is originating from the revolutionary works of Rosseau, which may suggest that the definition, given its emphasis on quite specific political history, may not have originally been intended for opinion-based studies. The term is also rarely used in the political discourse nor in everyday speech. However, for most scholars it is among the most used definitions in modern political science and perceive Mudde as one of the foremost scholars on populism (Schroeder, 2020). Therefore, this cannot be overlooked when discussing this subject, and will be the dominant definition and taken significantly into account in this thesis.

Jenssen further explains that the vague definition of populism is somewhat problematic in quantitative studies. Noting that the problems with defining populism from different parties have resulted in an "ideational approach" to further understand populism as a particular mindset or symbolic system (Jenssen, 2021). Mudde (2004) further explains that populism is characterized by a rhetoric of exaggeration, which aims to create a sense of threat and calls for resistance to the treacherous plans of "the elite". The populist tendency consists of a criticism of the elite while the speaker pretends to defend the interest of the people/the majority of citizens. Populism is known to occur in fragments:1) generalized criticism of 'the elite' as a group, 2) a reference to the unified people and their interests, either as a community, ethnic group, or political actor or 3) the thematization of the dangerous others or a crisis rhetoric. These are the three most common dimensions of populism, and if combined they become what is known as *complete populism.* Aalberg & de Vreese (2017) define several categories for different sorts of populism. Complete populism includes reference 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. (Aalberg & de Vreese 2017. p. 10).

These examples are commonly known as populist communication. The other notion of a 'populist style' in an ideological sense refers to 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 (Jupskås et. al, 2017, p. 55). This thesis is however based on populism as a communication style rather than an ideology. Populisms opposite, or "mirror", so to speak, is elitism. Elitism expresses the elitist perception of the relationship between the elites and the people. Where the populist views a corrupt and immoral elite, the elitist sees an ignorant and irresponsible people (Mudde, 2004). Pluralism, contrary to both populism and elitism, rejects the homogeneity of both ideologies, seeing society as a heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals with often fundamentally different views and wishes (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). As elitism and pluralism are major topics on their own, they will not be further mentioned and used for the results or discussion-segment of this thesis.

2.1.1 STATE OF RESEARCH ON POPULISM

As a direct consequence of the success of populist actors, research on populism has increased substantially. However, a large part of previous research in the last couple of years have sparked debate on whether populism is portrayed reasonably and if our understanding of the concept is in line with how it is used and conveyed to the public. Amongst the leading scholars in this field is Cas Mudde, who wrote *The Populist Zeitgeist* back in 2004. This article is crucial in understanding modern populism as a phenomenon amongst political parties and shaped the ways we interpret populism in several ways and is by many scholars viewed amongst the most important research on the topic when discussing the new era of populism. The reasons for the many controversies of populism in the research fields is its many definitions and interoperations. Mudde has also been a contributing scholar in defining populism, although there are still discussions on how the subject should be labeled, defined, and spoken of. Even in the academic literature populism is used to refer to a range of very different phenomena and is attached to a broad variety of 'host ideologies' and political actors (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012, p. 3).

There are also several other studies, that have tried answering whether the digital age is responsible for this sudden growth of not just populist movements, but also populist actors gaining power in different states. The 2016 election and deliberate disinformation campaigns are among the prime examples on how social media has shaped the conceptions – or rather misconceptions during democratic campaigns. Studies on how Facebook have affected democratic processes through populist content are too many to count in this subchapter. Although research on Instagram is somewhat limited (especially compared to Facebook). Larsson (2021) made a longitudinal study on the use of Instagram by political actors in Europe from 2012 to 2018 and found that populist appeared to be slower to adopt the service of Instagram compared to non-populist actors. However, the results presented in the study suggest that Instagram engagement shows that much like for other platforms, populist actors clearly surpass their non-populist competitors. Thus, the devices employed by populists on other platforms appear to translate well also when they take to a clearly image-based platform like Instagram (Larsson 2021, p.12). As of 2022 Instagram has been operative for twelve years, having grown to become a key platform for Norwegian politicians during the campaign. Among the key findings of Engesser et. al (2017) researching the social media communication at Facebook and Twitter of politicians in four different countries during a period of six months (1

January–30 June 2013), was that populism manifested itself in a fragmented form. They also found that populist communication was far more integral to mainstream parties:

"We also found populist elements across countries, parties, and politicians' status levels. These elements were included in posts from Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and the UK. Even mainstream parties such as Labour and the Conservatives in the UK or the social democrats in Austria and Switzerland made populist statements" (Engesser et. al, 2017, p. 1122).

One final point of this chapter is the assumption of populism being relatively new in the public discourse due to social media. Bertjan Verbeek and Andrej Zaslove denounce this notion, or at least pointing out that populist parties have delivered steady election results the last 30 years – even exceeding green parties in several countries. Although it is not particularly new, it is still rapidly rising in the political sphere: "To imply that populist parties are a new phenomenon is empirically not correct. It is important to note that if we tally up left and right populism, we see more populists than ever. In some extreme cases, such as in Italy, populist parties can compose up to 50 % of the vote (in both the 2013 and 2018 elections)" (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2019, p. 3).

2.2 POPULISM: A THIN IDEOLOGY?

The consensus about populism is that it is regarded as a thin, or more commonly as a thin-centered ideology (Mudde, 2004). But what does that mean specifically? In its most simplistic term, it only means that it is not limited to one certain ideology. Moreover, it is elaborated like this:

"As a thin-centred ideology, populism can be easily combined with very different (thin and thick) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism. Populism is moralistic rather than programmatic" (Mudde, 2004, p.544).

This suggests that populism is thin because it is a subset of ideas on already stronger established ideologies, and/or ideologies that overlap regardless of political leanings. This is also why scholars can do comparable studies between right- and left-wing populism without risking wrongful measurements based on the contrasting ideologies. In other words: if populism was not regarded as thin, this study would likely have been about left-wing or right-wing populism or a comparative study between the two. A thick ideology demands a broader definition that can tie up with a specific ideology. In the same sense, equality movements or feminism can be

seen as thin ideologies due to their diversity on both the political left and right (at least in a western context). Since the populist term is conveyed as thin, this study can focus on both left and right variants of populism.

"Thin populist movements mobilize popular support to replace elite leaders by undermining or corroding the deliberative and inclusionary principles of representative government. This variety of populism has been the dominant focus in scholarly and media discussions on populism in contemporary politics" (Dzur & Hendricks, 2018, p. 335). They go on to state that thin populism is the most known and used form in research, whereas 'thick' populism is more beneficial, with the introduction argument that thick populist movements are motivated by modifying or altering practices and conventions of representative government by offering democracy-enhancing and trust-building organizational forms and political practices (Dzur & Hendricks, 2018). Ralph Schroeder strongly challenges the (almost universal) consensus of defining traditional populism as a 'thin' ideology, even highlighting this perception as dangerous with the article *The Dangerous Myth of Populism as a Thin Ideology*. Schroeder suggests that to fully understand the concept of populism, it cannot be labeled as thin, whether it is nested in a subset of ideas or not, given its major influence on political movements:

"It is true that populism does not yet have as much historical force or tradition as socialism or liberalism. But the absence of a long historical tradition was also characteristic of fascism and communism, both of which certainly had strong, if relatively brief, efflorescences" (Schroeder, 2020, p.16).

Although Schroeder follows the approach that populism is coherently thick, this study is conducted on the established consensus on the term and will be defining it in a traditional sense as fundamentally thin. This approach is favourable in many senses. One of the many reasons for the notion of a thin-centred ideology, is that it offers a conceptualization that allows for comparison across time and space. Complementary to that, it makes it possible to link up populist leaders (parties) and followers in a systematic fashion (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2019, p. 14). Hence, this approach to measuring populism is seen as quite beneficial in quantitative studies.

2.2.1 'THE PEOPLE'
As already stated, the populist narrative of 'the people' vs 'the elite is central to the understanding of populism as a phenomenon. Oversimplified, the narrative is something like this: A populist wants to thwart the evil or corrupt elite but can only do so with help and/or

support from 'the people'. The populist is both a charismatic figure with own solutions and the messenger for the peoples will simultaneously. Once in power, the populist will ensure that the will of the people is heard and fulfilled. But what do populist mean when they claim to speak 'the will of the people'? And specifically: who is the people? 'The people' is a deeply ambiguous notion, with at least three core meanings. It can refer to the common or ordinary people, the people as plebs; to the sovereign people, the people as demos; and to the culturally or ethnically distinct people, the people as nation or ethnos (Brubaker, 2017, p. 359). In 2004 Paul Taggart offered a second definition of populism, in his article *Populism and representative politics in contemporary Europe,* that suggested to abandon the term "the people" and replacing it with other concepts, like "the heartland" or more nationalistic references. Other regard this often unclear ambiguous, and unspecific meaning of "the people" 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" (Reinemann et. al, 2017, p.16; Taggart, 2004). Another challenge with an understanding like this is that the use of 'the people' is used by populist all over the political sphere, rather than only populists with nationalistic agendas – due to the 'thinness' of the ideology. It is in other words not exclusively used to exclude members of other ethnic groups, such as immigrants. Specially in the context of social media campaigns, calling for 'the will of the people' could be seen as a mobilizing strategy that attempt to include as many as possible, regardless of social or cultural background, and might even be vague by design. Jeroen Hopster describes the use of the term 'the people' and how it fits into the understanding of populism like this:

"Thus understood, populism is ideologically flexible; it can have both right-wing and left-wing expressions. In its typical right-wing variety, the in-group is delineated in terms of national identity, and pitted against immigrants, or ethnic, religious and sexual minorities. In its typical left-wing variety, the in-group is defined in terms of class and pitted against the economic establishment, the privileged ethnic class, or the 'one percent' "(Hopster, 2020, p. 555).

2.3 POPULISM IN POWER

This subchapter will further elaborate on what is known empirically about populism as a subject. It can therefore not only be neglected to the tendencies of campaigning alone. A short introduction to what populist leadership looks like is therefore helpful. Populism in general is mostly used by outsider or challenger parties (Mudde, 2004). This is also the case in terms of coalition-based democracies, even so with non-populist parties. For instance: if the left is in

government, the oppositional right will often behave more populist during an election campaign to mobilize votes, and vice versa. This segment will however focus on populist actors and how they typically behave once in office. Or in other words: what happens when the anti-establishment becomes the establishment? Bang & Marsh (2018) attributes that a common explanation of the rise of populism points to the growth of inequality in developed economies, particularly in the context of a parallel rise in expectations. Populists are most often seen as favoured strong leaders over democratic institutions and traditions. As such, the image of the leader, who in many formulations embodies the nation, is crucial, and relatively little role is given to either the party or Parliament (Bang & Marsh, 2018, p. 353). Brubaker (2017) emphasizes that when in power, populists are dependent on crisis rhetoric and to dramatize their response to crisis, building a narrative of strong leadership in difficult times. Pappas (2019) argues that once in power, modern populism seeks to establish an order that is democratic but not liberal. Examples of this can be staging events that show jobs being saved or created, building walls, deporting undocumented immigrants, or rounding up terror suspects.
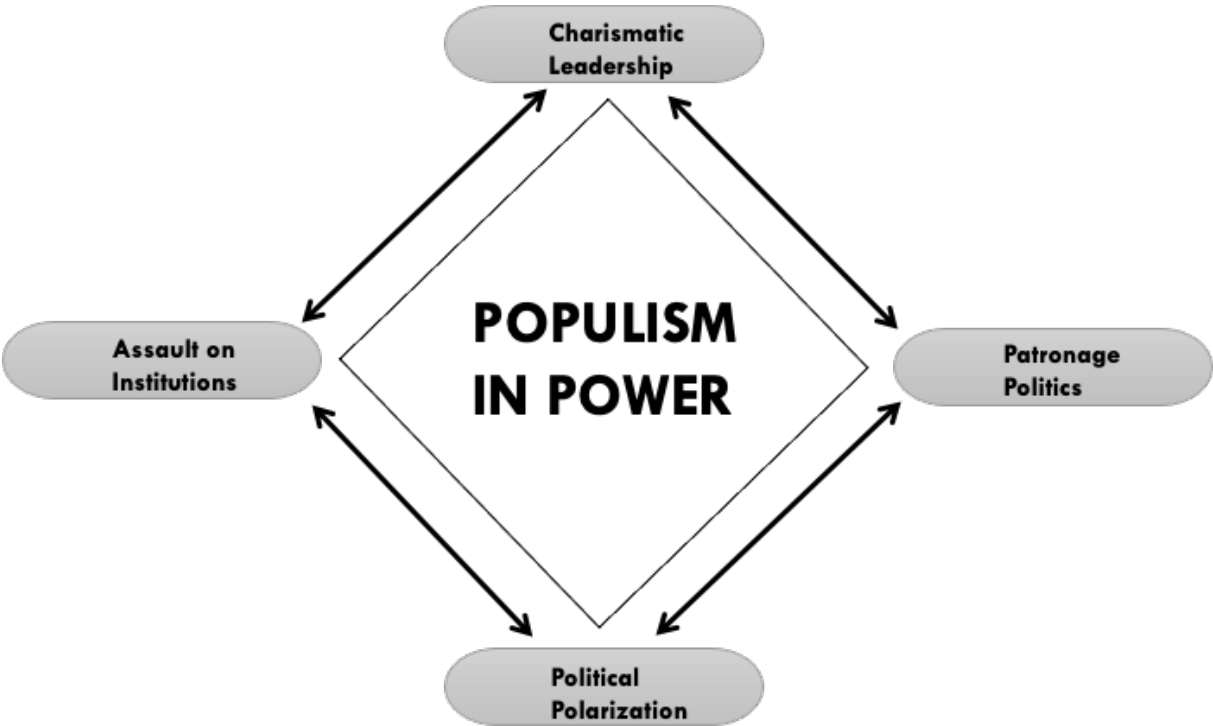

FIGURE 1: THE POPULIST RULE DIAMOND

Pappas (2019, p. 72, remade by the author)

Pappas attributes Figure 1 and these characteristics to leaders such as Juan Perón, Andreas Papandreou, Alberto Fujimori, Silvio Berlusconi, Hugo Chávez, and Viktor Orbán. Norway, however, has no justified analogy to this figure (or resemblances to any of the politicians mentioned, for that matter) in their modern history. This model does however give some useful insights to the central tendencies of what populist leaders, if elected, often look like. Even though these are among the common tendencies for populists, Miró (2021) who researched the political tensions of the Catalan secessionist push, notes that in certain cases, if populism is about the forming of new political coalitions through the articulation of heterogeneous social demands against the current power bloc, it implies that the chains of equivalences sustaining these coalitions can gradually break up, and that a movement or party can become less populist or even stop being populist (Mirò, 2021, p. 4). Another aspect of this is how populist challenging for power affect already established governments, as Cas Mudde clarifies that even though populism is more common among oppositional parties, mainstream politicians, both in government and in opposition, have been using it as well, often as a counterstrategy aimed towards the populist challengers (Mudde, 2004, p. 551). This suggests that, hypothetically, non-populist can become more populist also in office if the opposition actively uses it to challenge the governing power.

2.4. POPULISM AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In this chapter we look closely at the literature regarding how social media has contributed to the rise of populism. In the wake of the Brexit campaign and the United States presidential elections of 2016, it has become commonplace to link the rise of populism with the rise of social media (Hopster, 2021, p. 553). As of 2022, there has been a significant increase of research on how social media shapes our political conceptions – for better and worse. While social media gives easier access to parties and information about their policies, societies are potentially more exposed to populist rhetoric than ever before. This is somewhat given to the massive increase in activity on digital media over the last decades. Social media offers a new dimension of communication, since it has given political actors the opportunity to get a message across without going through the news media, which they would traditionally do to get necessary coverage. During political campaigns, parties typically hope to spread their information widely due to Facebook's enormous range, but the traditional mass media remain important; journalists are the second most important target group of their Facebook campaigns (Magin et al. 2017, p.

1707). Populist campaigning is therefore less reliant on traditional media coverage and more so with how they represent themselves on social media, even though coverage in traditional media channels still plays an important role. With social media they are to distribute information unfiltered – and often unchecked. Hopster (2020) has four main distinct affordances to populism on social media, and how it's perceived in comparison to the previous media ecology:

"a. Social media allow citizens and politicians to circumvent editorial filters; b. Social media algorithms allow sensational claims to spread comparatively easily; c. The low-level affordances of social media invite a 'populist style' of communication; d. Social media allow for the real-time expression – and measurement – of the 'general will' of the people " (Hopster, 2020, p. 556).

With the latter point, one could argue that it doesn't necessarily show the accurate will of the people, since only a small fragment of political discourse is visible in this form of communication As Jost (2020) specifies, social media ended the age of one-sided mediated political top-down communication. The Trump campaign's use of Twitter saw the potential of this, often retweeting and responding to little-known supporters who had few followers or were otherwise not known to the public (Baldwin-Philippi, 2019, p. 381). However, the Obama 2008 campaign eight years prior is by many regarded as the starting point of this type of communication. As a result of the rise of social media, candidates and parties can distribute their messages on platforms such as Facebook and Twitter and make their positions visible to the public. Another element of the populist movements that has enhanced simultaneously with the rise of social media is distrust in institutions, most noticeably what's often labelled as 'mainstream media' (MSM) (a better term to use in this context is 'legacy media', as the mainstream media is often occupied by right-wing actors to delegitimize the established news media). Gerbaudo states that attacks against what right-wing populist often would call resistance against legacy media is a common feature of many online conversations connected with populist movements. The same applies for invitations for people to share alternative news outlets, based on the persuasion that "the mainstream media does not want you to know the truth", which also often lead to echo chambers or conspiratorial thinking. On the Right, such opposition to mainstream news media discourse is often expressed in attacks against political correctness and the authority of experts (Gerbaudo, 2018). A theoretical relation between populism and online communication was already established early in the history of the Internet (Bimber, 1998, p. 317). Some scholars bestowed the Internet with the potential to 'restructure political power in a populist direction' and to promote unmediated communication between

politicians and citizens (Engesser et. al, 2017, p. 1113). Even though social media allows users to circumvent traditional editorial filters, the messages displayed at Facebook and Twitter News Feeds are not unfiltered. Their contents are selected and ranked by an algorithm, thereby influencing which messages users are most likely to see (Hopster, 2021, p. 557). Other scholars suggest that populism's rise can be explained due to social media platforms actively favouring populist content.

Gerbaudo (2018) borrows Max Weber's famous term from sociology 'elective affinity' to explain how populism has risen in social media over the last years, pointing to the most notorious right-wing populists in Donald Trump and Nigel Farage on the right, but also leftists such as Pablo Iglesias and Bernie Sanders, framing them as prominent populist of the left:

"What we are witnessing across these diverse phenomena is what could be tentatively described as an 'elective affinity' between social media and populism: social media has favoured populist against establishment movements by providing the former a suitable channel to invoke the support of ordinary people against the latter" (Gerbaudo, 2018, p. 746).

The prospect of 'elective affinity' in the context of social media populism has not been received without critique. Postill (2018) objects to Gerbaudo (2018) with three main arguments. Postills first objection is that populists are hardly the first group to use social media as a direct strategy in campaigning and populism is not a demand for social network campaigning to be effective, highlighting the two Obama campaigns in 2008 and 2012 respectively, while categorizing Obama as a prominent 'non-populist'. Secondly, Postill claims it would be "an error to regard social media as a realm apart from the rest of the media environment. Instead, social media are an integral part of the total media system" (Postill, 2018, p. 761). The third and final objection is that just as social media are nested within larger hybrid media systems. This means that these systems are themselves part of even larger communication systems that include transport and telecommunications networks as well as public spaces where physical interaction takes place, mentioning mosques or churches and even slums. Postill goes on to say that in these differentiated sites, communication comes in many forms, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, mass, and public communication, both online and offline. Hopster (2021) suggests that populist leaders aren't necessarily favoured on the platform architecture of social media companies. Rather suggesting that there is a symbiosis between them, whereby social media benefit from populists' campaigns for attention since these campaigns contribute to the popularity of the social media platforms. He further concludes by stating:

"As a result, there is little reason to suppose that social media companies will proactively seek to readjust their algorithms in ways unfriendly to populism, even if populist ideologies conflict with the prevailing political views in Silicon Valley. Instead, the alliance of interests might well persist, and help to facilitate a stable presence of populism in global politics for years to come" (Hopster, 2021, p. 559).

Populist content, and the algorithms that spread them to Facebook users have been heavily linked with the term disinformation, perhaps most noticeably due to the last two US elections. Disinformation is different from the term misinformation, as disinformation is misleading or wrongful information by the sender's intent, whereas misinformation describes media with no intention to deceive. Disinformation is made and spread with the main intention to deceive its audience (Wardle & Derekhshan, 2017). It is therefore a stronger consensus on modern populists being more reliant on disinformation and polarization on social media (Benkler et. al, 2018). Schroeder (2020) disputes this, elaborating that in a historical sense, populism reaches back at least into the late 19th century in the United States and beyond, while in Europe it has been prominent since the 1990s or earlier. Polarization and disinformation, primarily on social media, are not uniquely related to populism alone.

From a sociological perspective, empirical studies on the matter of voting behaviour suggest that voting on PRR (populist radical right) is not due to social isolation (due to obsessive use of social media or active participation in digital echo chambers), either in Western or Eastern Europe (Rydgren, 2011; Zhirkov, 2014; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017, p. 912).

2.4.1 FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM

Since the data in question is solely based on posts on Facebook and Instagram, it would be useful to see what empirical basis these platforms have. Facebook is the oldest and biggest platform of the two, and has as of 2022, 2,912 billion users, according to the site Datareportal.com and 3.471.000 Norwegian users according to the Norwegian marketing agency Synlighet (Robertsen, 2020). This makes it the most used social network among all websites, and therefore the most natural one to produce political communication. Instagram on the other hand, has 1,478 billion users making it the fourth most used social media platform globally (Kemp, 2022) as of 2021. Kalsnes & Pettersen (2019) addresses the scandals that have plagued political processes due to Facebook guidelines in the past: "The optimistic and somewhat naive aim of Facebook – give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected – is in deep contrast to the scandals who have plagued the site in later years.

Such as fake profiles, misuse of user data, surveillance, tracking of civilians and manipulation of political elections" (Kalsnes & Pettersen, 2019 p. 2). While Facebook is more of a known all-around platform that offers more variations in content, Instagram is more of a visual platform heavily leaning on photographs and short videos. It has still become a vital place for candidates of the bigger parties. It also offers an opportunity to relate to parties' politicians from a more personal angle.

2.5 POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In total, there are 10 parties in the Norwegian parliament, or Stortinget, as of the 2021 election results. The Norwegian party system is described as consisting of two parties on the left on the dominant left-right-axis: Sosialistisk Venstreparti(SV) and Arbeiderpartiet (Ap). Three centrum parties: Senterpartiet (Sp), Kristelig Folkeparti (KrF) and Venstre (V). And to parties to the right: Høyre (H) and Fremskrittspartiet (FrP) (Ihlen, Skogerbø & Allern, 2015). In this chapter, all parties with seats in parliament will be introduced from largest to smallest. For continuity all parties will be referred to with either their Norwegian names and/or abbreviations The exceptions for this are parties with only one letter in abbreviations (Høyre, Venstre, Rødt). This is to avoid confusion later in the results chapter. Below is a table with the different parties and their results during the 2021 election.

TABLE 1: PARTIES IN THE NORWEGIAN STORTING AND ELECTIONS RESULTS

Political party	Positioning	Votes (%)	Seats (n=169)
Arbeiderpartiet (Ap)	Left	26.3	48
Høyre (H)	Right	20.4	36
Senterpartiet (Sp)	Left	13.5	28
Fremskrittspartiet (FrP)	Right	11.6	21
Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV)	Left	7.6	13
Rødt (R)	Left	4.7	8
Venstre (V)	Right	4.6	8
Miljøpartiet De Grønne (MDG)	Left	3.9	3
Kristelig folkeparti (KrF)	Right	3.8	3
Pasientfokus (PF)	Independent	0.2	1
Other	N/R	2.3	0
Scratch votes	N/R	0.8	0

In total, the left parties won with a total 56 % of the votes up against 40.4 % of the votes of the parties on the right. The remaining 3.6 % were for either small parties or none of the above/scratch votes. These have been marked as not relevant in political positioning, as they do not account for any of the total seats in parliament.
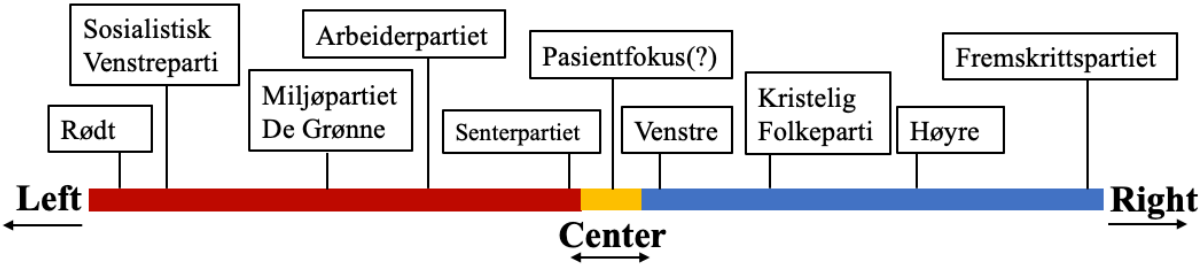

FIGURE 2: AXIS OF NORWEGIAN PARTIES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

Figure 2 is a common understanding on how the different parties differ in left/right politics and which parties are conceived as most radical or centrum based. It also illustrates which block each party belongs to and political distance to other parties. This is a heuristic and not meant

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as illustrating the exact size of the ideological distances between the parties. Depending on how one defines as 'radical', 'liberal' or 'conservative', the placements of each party can obviously be further discussed. The only party which we yet still know very little about is PF, as they have recently been voted into parliament and have not had the time to establish their political profile other than their core issues. Since they did not openly endorse either the left or right coalition in their campaign, and their ideological leanings are still a bit unclear, they have been placed in the exact center of this axis. Rødt and FrP is placed as the parties furthest to the left and right, respectively. They are therefore interpreted as the most radical among all parties in parliament all in all, which will be relevant later for the research questions and hypotheses. Like other western countries, campaigning in Norway is mostly focused on the party as a unity rather than the individual top candidate, contrary to the US, for instance. However, parties differ in how much they present themselves with party leaders. Candidates from Ap and FrP normally focuses on the party, while candidates from Høyre and KrF are more inclined to also highlight their own candidacy (Karlsen, 2015, p. 213). This aspect of their campaigning is however not present in the adjustments made for the dataset.

2.6.1 THE NORWEGIAN ELECTION SYSTEM

This segment will be a short introduction and explain only the pure basics of how the Norwegian parliament election works. This is relevant for the thesis to understand what motivates each party during a campaign and what is at stake for some of them. It is also important to establish this for the discussion later on.

As many western countries, Norway is a representative democracy with elections to their national parliament (Stortinget) (Aalberg, Elvestad & Skogerbø, 2015). In Norway, parliamentary elections take place every four years. Norway is depicted as a constitutional monarchy with three estates (or estate of realm): government, parliament, and courts. Each party campaigns for votes, in return based on the results, they get representative seating in parliament. Number of seats is also crucial to decide which parties have a majority to sit in government. The more votes a party gets, the more seats it will be rewarded with. Ap, having the largest number of voters, holds 48 seats. This gives them the most influence over parliament in voting processes. Also, to divide smaller parties from bigger ones there is a minimum limit of 4 % of the votes nationwide. This is known as '*sperregrensen*' (threshold). This is to restrict

amount of smaller parties getting into parliament. Therefore is vital for the number of seats a party gets. MDG were 0.1 % of the votes away from getting 4 %. This would have given them eight seats due to extra levelling seats party over 4 % receives. Instead, they got three seats. The percentage of voters for each side, determines whether a government is voted out or gets to continue. By design, parliament holds 169 seats. This is to prevent a tied result between the two coalitions, where one side must have at least 85 seats to be in the majority. The election of 2021 resulted in a clear advantage for the left parties, and therefore the conservative government were voted out of office. Both the political left and right work in a coalition, where each party determines who they endorse for government. Endorsement is independent of whether a party wants to rule in government or not. Rødt had their best results in history and got over the fine line of the 4 % threshold. However, they never had intentions of being a governing party. Even so, they did support a government led by Ap with Jonas Gahr Støre as the new prime minister since they supported a left coalition rather than a goverment.

As for the parties, here is a brief introduction to all ten parties in the Norwegian parliament. Parties are introduced from biggest to smallest as of the 2021 election. As this is a quick introduction, the Norwegian encyclopedia Store Norske Leksikon have been used to cite the basic history and ideologies from each party. This encyclopedia uses scholars as authors and is deemed credible. However, if inconsistencies in already established in definitions occur, they will be clarified. The numbers of parties following on social media is updated to their numbers as of 1.06.2022. This is to establish the reach every party has with their posts, although the numbers of followers most likely have increased or decreased since the election. Due to the differences in size, numbers of followers vary in accuracy, as Instagram tends to round off the amount when a page reaches a certain number of followers.

The Labour party (Arbeiderpartiet/AP)

Historically Ap has always carried the term social democratic and was founded back in 1887. It's historically been the biggest party in all parliamentary elections since 1927. [..] Ap has been the most influential party in Norway after World War II (Tvedt, Bull & Garvik, 2022). Jonas Gahr Støre has been the party's top candidate since 2013 and became prime minister after the election, succeeding Erna Solberg. Ap has a following of 138 508 on Facebook and 28 000 on Instagram.

The Conservative party (Høyre/H)

Høyre is a conservative party and was founded in 1884, making it the second oldest political party in all of Norway. Erna Solberg has served as party leader since 2004 and prime minister from 2013 to 2021. [..] Even though Høyre and AP have been portrayed as political rivals, historically, the two parties have voted similarly in central political questions, such as foreign - and defense policies, oil and energy policies, and a lot of the industry policies regarding the welfare state. In January 2019 Solberg achieved her goal in making a government consisting of a right majority, having all right parties in the coalition (Høyre, FrP, KrF, Venstre), which hadn't happened since 1985. The joy was however short lived, as FrP one year after decided to leave its place in government (Tvedt, Notaker & Garvik, 2022b). Høyre has 125 287 followers on Facebook and 42 500 on Instagram.

The Center Party (Senterpartiet/Sp)

Formed in 1920 originally named Bondepartiet(The farmers party), Sp defines itself as a centrum-based party in Norwegian politics. Historically, they have cooperated in government with parties both on the left and right. [..] Traditionally, Sp has been tied to the farmers movement in Norway and has had district policies and de-centralization as its core issues. Sp opposes Norwegian EU-membership and the EEA-agreement (Tvedt & Garvik, 2022). Before the parliamentary in election 2005, Sp changed their political block from right to left and went into government with Ap and SV (Karlsen, 2015). Their party leader is Trygve Slagsvold Vedum, who has led the party since 2014. Sp has 48 840 followes on Facebook and 8 662 on Instagram.

The Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet/FrP)

Founded 8th April 1973. The party belongs on the right side in Norwegian politics and describes itself as a 'liberalist folk party'. [..] FrP's ideology is a mix of right-wing-populism and more traditional economic liberalism. The party has also heavily pinned themselves as a protest movement from the established parties and uses the slogan "for folk flest" (for most people) (Jupskås & Garvik, 2022). Whether the term right-wing-populism is justified based on the definitions of Mudde (2004) and Reinemann et. al (2017) is however not clarified, although FrP has a history with top candidates who embrace the populist term (Bjørklund, 2004). The party was first seen as a protest movement against higher taxes. They have kept this profile but has also been a profiled as a party against immigration (Ihlen, Skogerbø & Allern, 2015, p. 94).

Sylvi Listhaug had been confirmed as new leader of the party just six months before the election., succeeding Siv Jensen who had led the party since 2006 (Helljesen, Krekling & Tollersrud, 2021). FrP is the most followed party on Facebook with 155 480 but a big gap down to 13 300. followers on Instagram.

The Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti/SV)

Founded 16th March 1975, SV is a primarily a socialist party belonging to the left-wing of Norwegian politics. SV was previously in government with Ap and Sp (2003-2013). [..] SV wants, according to its party program, to build a society based on socialism. They also want to replace the capitalistic system with a more democratic economic system. SV support full equality between the genders and label themselves as a 'feminist party'. (Garvik, 2022c). Since the 80's SV has had a larger focus on marking themselves as a leading climate party (Heidar & Saglie, 2002). Audun Lysbakken has been the party's leader since 2012. Their Facebook account is followed by 63 705 users, while their Instagram has 27 900 individual users following.

The Red Party (Rødt/R)

Rødt was founded in 2007 after The Workers' Communist Party (AKP) and Red Electoral Alliance (RV) merged to gather forces on the left-wing. [..] Rødt is a socialist party that has the battle against «welfare profiteers» as a red thread in the party's policies. They are skeptical to private or commercialized actors owning kindergartens or running health services. International solidarity is also a core issue, and battle against oppression, war and racism is central in the party's program (Garvik, 2022d). According to the Popu-List's graph, Rødt is perceived as a Eurosceptic party, but not a populist one (Rooduijn et. al, 2019). Rødt's Euroscepticism is most visible in their reluctance to Norwegian EU-membership and ambitions to pull Norway out of NATO. Rødt's top candidate is Bjørnar Moxnes. In 2012 he was elected as the new party leader at the age of 30, making him amongst the youngest ever top candidates by a main party in Norwegian politics (NTB, 2012). Rødt has 73 106 followers on Facebook and 23 700 on Instagram.

The Liberal Party (Venstre/V)

Formed the 28th of January 1884, V is the oldest political party in Norway. [..] V defines itself as a social-liberal. According to its program of principles, Venstre wishes for a state that "Actively fights social injustice in society. Yet we still wish to avoid that the state's elected interest organizations get too much power at the expense of the individuals in society". At its national convention in 2020, Venstre decided that they wanted Norway gradually to be a member of the EU. Since 1972 the party had been opposed to Norwegian membership (Garvik, Tvedt & Grimnes, 2022). The name *Venstre* directly translates to "left" in Norwegian but is paradoxically placed on the political right. This is due to the fact that back in 1884 *Høyre* (directly translated to "right") and Venstre was the only two parties. Therefore, they were separated as two opposites with their names. H had a broader appeal to people living in urban areas, whilst V was perceived as the party representing the periphery (Karlsen 2015, p. 93). Venstre has 37 595 followers on Facebook and 8 750 followers on Instagram.

The Green Party (Miljøpartiet De Grønne/MDG)

MDG was formally founded in 1988. [..] The party can be placed inside a bigger European family of Green Parties. This 'party family' is known for ecological thinking, feminism, pacifism, grassroot democracy and cultural diversity (Jupskås & Garvik, 2022). Although the party has previously been positive to cooperating with both the political left and right in government, it has only recently begun to define itself as a somewhat centrum-left-oriented party. Formerly the party has had two representatives of both genders as national spokespersons, rather than a single individual as party leader. However, they changed this back in 2020, once electing Une Aina Bastholm as their first ever party leader in 26 years (Kristiansen, 2020). MDG is followed by 68 601 individual users on Facebook and roughly 26 600 users on Instagram.

The Christian Democratic Party (Kristelig Folkeparti/KrF)

Formed in 1933. KrF is regarded as a non-socialist centrum party, based on christian values. [..] KrF has from its very beginning had its main aim to protect Christianity and traditional moral values. This makes the party quite unique. The party has no clear differentiation in class, and has therefore no sharply defined economic or social profile (Garvik & Tvedt, 2022). KrF has a following of 23 696 on Facebook and 5 346 on Instagram.

Patient Focus (Pasientfokus/PF)

Pasientfokus is a party that was founded in the county of Finnmark in 2021 and participated in parliamentary election the same year for the first time. Their main cause is a new hospital structure in Finnmark county, and particularly a bigger hospital in Alta, the largest city in Finnmark county. The party only participated on the electoral list in Finnmark and got 12,7 % of the votes in the county. This was enough for one seat in parliament with party leader Irene Ojala being their only parliamentary representative (Garvik, 2022e). This does not make PF the most influential party amongst the minor parties. Even though they are not the biggest of small parties in terms of voting, but their percentage among the voting counties, due to Norway's electoral system, gave them one seat in parliament. They are also, as formerly mentioned the only party in parliament who has not chosen a block on the political landscape. PF has 3 737 followers on Facebook and is the only of the 10 parties with no official account on Instagram.

2.7 POPULISM IN NORWAY

Most northern countries show the same tendencies historically in regard to populism. This is due to the fact that political parties in Scandinavia have directly influenced and inspired each other, as both Denmark and Norway have both a Progress Party with the same name and similar set of ideas. In a broader sense, left/right-wing populism differs in many areas, also in the northern countries. Right-wing versions often seek to exclude immigrants, for example, whereas left-wing versions seek to defend against the globalizing economic threats that undercut workers' rights (Schroeder, 2020, p. 14). Historically speaking, this was perhaps most visible in Norway in the early 70's, with Ottar Brox as a prominent left-wing populist and Anders Lange, the founder of Anders Langes Parti (now FrP) as an outspoken right-wing populist. While being political opposites, they shared one similar trait: both Brox and Lange embraced the populist term and were proud self-proclaimed populists. Lange even went one step further and started to describe himself as a demagogue (Bjørklund, 2017).

On the point of labeling populist ideas to left-right issues, Mabel Berezin acknowledges the variety of left-wing and right-wing populisms. She also seems to accept the tendency to use populism "as a default term in public discourse and in the scholarly literature to describe the political phenomena that comprise the class of events constituting the right" (De Cleen & Savrakis, 2017: Berezin 2009, p. 26). In a Norwegian context, the current election was noticeably different from others in the past, mainly due to the climate crisis and Norway's role, being a nation which has profited tremendously on its own oil resources. Economically and

industrially, Norway stands out from the other Nordic countries as a major producer of oil and gas. The petroleum industry employs directly and indirectly around 170,000 people (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2020). Given the political development due to climate change, environmental issues automatically create division between the parties in parliament – and also, to some extent – populism. Later in the results chapter, to what extent populism plays in environmental policy content online by each party will be answered.

Even though not being significantly delving into the political subjects in themselves, some of the discussion following the results will be aimed at the possibilities different parties have had to galvanize populist rhetoric due to their political stands. The political left are represented by Ap, Sp, SV, Rødt and MDG. The right consists of Høyre, Venstre, KrF, and FrP (the latter as the only one of the right parties in opposition). Pasientfokus, the smallest party in parliament has yet not declared which side of the isle it belongs to, being an interest party with its policies mostly limited to the county of Finnmark and the health services there. The government before the election consisted of a coalition between Høyre, Venstre and KrF. However, they had support from FrP, even though they left government, as of February 2020 (Matre & Johansen, 2020).

Norway has potentially populist parties both on the left (Rødt, SV), right(FrP) and center of (Sp) its parliament. All of them have a history in populist rhetoric aimed at different elites, ideologies and ethnic or cultural groups. SV and Rødt are socialist parties born of the Norwegian labour movement, whilst Sp is a party that has its origins in the Norwegian suburbs, highlighting the interest of Norwegian agriculture industry, mainly farming branches and skepticism of EU/EEA membership. As previously mentioned, Sp, Ap and Høyre also could potentially relate to the under communicated category phenomenon of centrist populism. According to Postill (2018) centrist populists are often accused of being opportunistic technocrats who borrow some of the populist rhetoric and blend it with a pro-market language of job flexibility, entrepreneurship, and economic growth (Postill, 2018, p. 757). FrP was born out of the right-wing immigration-skeptical movement and has since the 1980s profiled itself as a party opposing immigration (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2020). According to the PopuList, a close cooperation between academics and journalists worldwide, initiated by The Guardian and several scholars (Cas Mudde and, among others), FrP is deemed as a populist, far right, Eurosceptic party (Roouduijn et. al, 2019). PopuList regard FrP as the only populist party of the mainstream Norwegian parties. Only Kp (Kystpartiet/ Coastal Party) is also defined as a populist party. However, as Kp only had 171 votes in total during the 2021 election (Garvik,

2021) and have barely any political relevance as of 2021 and are therefore not included in the dataset. Thus, according to this survey there is only one Norwegian political party with significant influence on the Norwegian population that is categorized as 'populist'. The table below in mainly focused on Eurosceptic parties, hence parties such as Ap, H, V, MDG are not included. As the research is from 2019, Pasientfokus are also obviously not present.

TABLE 2: WHICH PARTIES IN NORWAY ARE CONSIDERED AS POPULIST

Party abbrev.	Far left	Populist	Far right	Eurosceptic
FrP		●	●	●
KrF				●
Kp		●		●
Rødt	●			●
Sp				●
SV	●			●

Table retrieved from: www.thepopu-list.org (remade by the author)

FrP has usually been classified as neoliberal populist rather than national populist, even if xenophobia is at the core of the party's ideology (Jupskås et. al, 2017, p. 57.) Jenssen (2017) states that if we are to hold political parties to the criterias of Jagers & Welgrave (2007), which demands description of the people as 'homogeneous', critique of elites, and exclusion of population segments, FrP (as of 2017) is only practicing the latter of these three criteriums to a higher extent, also pointing out that xenophobia is very much still a contributing factor to their communication. It is however the only of the three criteriums, and therefore suggest that FrP cannot justifiably be viewed as a populist party, but rather a market liberal right-wing party. In a response to both Jenssen (2017) and Østerud (2017), Anders Ravik Jupskås frames it as misleading, and stating that there are at least two problems with the definition that Jenssen (2017) is basing his argument on. "Firstly, it is only focus is the populist aspect with these political parties, and it therefore loses eyesight on the most important issue: the excluding nationalism (often referred to as nativism in the professional literature). This nationalism is often linked to immigration resistance and Euroscepticism, including an assimilating integration policy" (Jupskås, 2017, p. 403). Jupskås therefore on that basis concludes that FrP is still a populist party as of 2017. In regard to this study, the definition of Jagers & Welgrave (2007) is not the criterium used when measuring populist communication.

2.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

For this study I phrase the following research question:

"Which role did populism play in Norwegian parties' election campaigns on Facebook and Instagram during the 2021 national election campaign?"

Along with the main research question, there are three main hypotheses and follow-up research questions this thesis will attempt to answer. These are my main hypotheses based on the previous research mentioned earlier:

H1. The more ideologically radical a party is (both left/right), the more strongly it uses populist rhetoric.

H2. The use of populist rhetoric is more common among opposition parties than governing parties.

H3. Smaller parties use populism more commonly than mid-size or large parties.

RQ1: Do different parties have a preferred variant of populism? If so – which parties used which variant of populism during the span of the 2021 election campaign?

RQ2: Which topics political topics sparked most populism?

RQ3: How does Facebook and Instagram differ in terms of percentage of populism – if at all?

3. METHOD

In this chapter, choice of method will be explained and how the dataset used was collected. This thesis compares different parties and their use and frequency of populist rhetoric. Due to the nature of my research question, the quantitative method with a descriptive content analysis was the most natural route to go. To get an objective sense of how to measure something as complex and vague as populism, strict rules need to be applied from the very start. That is mainly the reason why populism is measured by the criteria of certain definitions (Mudde, 2004) and Reinemann et. al (2017). This among other things bases on populism as a thin ideology, which also was a requirement when coding all the 10 parties under investigation. Top candidates are not included in the findings. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, this thesis is restricted to content posted by the party, not individuals. Single politicians can have statements or tendencies that does not necessarily represent the party. To fundamentally examine to which degree parties behave populist, it must be judged on the premise that posts are from the entire party as the sender. Secondly, when first viewing the different categories, it became clear that content published by top candidates does not differ very much compared to posts from the party with regards the categories in this research. There is in other words little to suggests that the results are radically different with parties compared to politicians, with few exceptions.

3.1 SAMPLE AND DATA COLLECTION

The sample used in this thesis were collected for the international collaborative research project "Digital Election Campaigning Worldwide (DigiWorld)" in which I worked as one of three coders. I was allowed by the project leader Melanie Magin to use these data for my master thesis. Raw data has been obtained with the program CrowdTangle. Coding was done using the common DigiWorld coding scheme (with some adjustments to the specific Norwegian situation). After some months of coder training, the data was coded from December 2021 to January 2022. In total, we coded 1,045 posts that were published on the official Facebook and Instagram pages of the ten political parties which made it into the parliament in the four weeks before election day. Three of these posts could not be coded since they had been deleted, which led to a final sample of 1,042 posts (Facebook: 722; Instagram: 320). The final analysis was executed in SPSS Statistics. Data was later analyzed by means of cross tables which were suited to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses in a understandable and statistically accurate way. The measure correlations Cramer's V has been included as symmetric

measurements when running the variables through SPSS. All in all, there are 13 categories of populism. The tables presented in the results chapter presents how the different categories and how much they were visible in each of the respective parties' posts during election campaigning.

3.2 CODING POPULISM

The coding scheme includes 13 individual, binary categories covering if the respective category of populism was included in a post (=1) or not (=0). For a more detailed look into the categories, see appendix. To get an "objective" sense of how to measure something as complex and vague as populism, strict rules need to be applied from the very start. Therefore, the categories for measuring populism are based on Mudde (2004) and Reinemann et. al (2017).

Some of the used categories for populism will be mentioned in brackets in this paragraph. All categories with further descriptions are available in attachments. Among the categories coded from 1 to 0 were five distinguished elites. These were: political actors (elite11), bureaucrats and public administration (elite12), economic elite (elite13), The news media/legacy media, journalists, pundits and polling companies (elite14), social media companies (elite16) and lastly supranational elite (e.g., EU and UN); Western world; 'Mainstream' world order (elite15). Other categories included references to the people (people) and two categories for dangerous others, either targeted at political "others" (danger12) or ethnic or cultural "others" (danger11). If a post matched with the given description, they would be coded as such.

The Facebook and Instagram content coded is every post the political parties published on their Instagram and Facebook accounts. Even though every post of the parties now in parliament is coded and analysed this was not without limitations. To ensure we were able to get through a big amount of data, and follow the guidelines in the coding scheme, posts with several pictures or videos surpassing one minute have been limited to the first picture and the first minute. This means that there is most likely a significant number of posts that are not taken into account due to restrictions. These were mainly in-depth videos, livestreams, or several individual photos in one post. There were however no similar restrictions for length of texts. On average, it is estimated that one post took six minutes to code. For a post to be coded as any of the populist categories, the content would have to explicitly maintain one or several categories. Therefore, there could potentially be implicit cases populism that would not be coded.

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3.3 QUALITY OF RESEARCH

To fairly review the quality of this research, one has to look further on the different weaknesses that might be included in these types of studies. Quantitative research is always at risk of human errors of over – or under reporting, especially in political analysis where observants interpret content. However, given that every post from every party is included in the dataset, there is no risk of 'cherry picking' when analysing results from each party. This study is no different in that matter. Also, even though quantitative methods are the most common in studies like this, Engesser et. al (2017) points out that this is meritorious but also bears inherent problems, such as a potential overestimation of accuracy. This also can fall under the reporting of the data in question. However, the reliability tests put in motion are made to assure that these potential errors do not occur often. Furthermore, the categories used for this study are somewhat vague when it comes to the specific types of populism. It can very effectively measure which parties that are most populist. The main phenomenon investigated in this thesis is to what degree parties use populism to a statistically significant extent, which type of populism they use, and which elites' parties try to oppose in their digital campaigning. In some regards, somewhat vague numbers can also be a strength – given that the measures are well established and not compared with different sides of political discussions.

Left and right-wing populism are measured with the same specific criteria equally. This makes wrongful reporting due to unconscious political bias harder, to a certain extent (although, hypothetically it could always occur). It can be argued that this sort of general data – despite its limitations – gives a more complete picture of populist rhetoric and removes some of the perhaps wrongful intuitions we have about populism and which side it "rightfully" belongs to. That being said, there is a tremendous amount of research on the subject in general, which will definitely work to this thesis' advantage, even though there are only a handful of theories regarding populism that are considered to be the general consensus. These are mainly Mudde (2004), Reinemann et. al (2017) and Aalberg & de Vreese (2017).

3.3.1 RELIABILITY

Before the coding started, several reliability tests were executed – including one additional test after the main coding was finished, to assure that the dataset was consistent throughout the coding process. In total, the reliability test bases on 140 posts which were coded by all three coders, and the test used data from all reliability tests. This is what commonly known as an

inter-rater reliability, a test between independent observants that measures agreement. Even though there have been several reliability tests in place there is still a possibility that some segments of the data can include wrongful coding. It is however unlikely that this could be a substantial amount big enough to affect the dataset. After the coding process was finished, every coder received results from the several reliability tests. Variables that failed to meet the requirements of 0.6 or lower on BP. Kappa (Brennan & Prediger Kappa) were subsequently excluded from any possible analysis. This means that the variables used in this thesis are all sufficient and has a substantial reliability between all three coders.

3.3.2 VALIDITY

When discussing validity, it often addresses potential traps in research, or how one can avoid pitfalls that can be easily stumbled across in scientific research (Skog, 2004). Validity is in this sense related to how well quantitative content analysis' like this one can prove actual correlations and effects. When working with smaller cases, the high reliability among variables is reassuring in terms of possible wrongful coding, even though the successful reliability test isn't proof for validity, it is however a quite convincing indicator. The previous mentioned reliability tests combined with the supervision of internal and external experts of the coding scheme, makes the likelihood of the data validity quite strong, and removes some of the risk for errors in measurement. The data gathered for this thesis are, as formerly mentioned, done by several contributors, with supervision. This has allowed several measurements to be tested and corrected over time. Another point for of validity is that this is an internal dataset, rather than an external one (external meaning a dataset where the researcher has not been able to observe the data collection process). With this dataset, all contributors have seen how it has developed over time, which is therefore being reassuring those findings and tendencies are indeed correct.

3.3.3 GENERALIZABILITY

The dataset takes into account all posts by every political party in parliament. The number of posts does differ from party to party. This is because the amount of how many posts each party decided to publish is different. Some risk may occur in over-reporting if a party has significantly more posts than others, hence, all findings are based on percentages rather than individual cases. It is therefore not necessarily a proportionate selection in terms of total number of posts by party. However, it is a most proportionate selection due to every post by every party being included in the dataset. The numbers of posts and calculations by percentage does not pose a

challenge to evaluate the validity of findings. Since each party has at least 49 or more posts in total, the findings in the results segment can be properly evaluated.

3.4 RESEARCH ETHICS

Ethical problems risks associated with ordinary people or sensitive data were low in this dataset. This is due to the raw data being public on both Facebook and Instagram with the intention of being as public for voters as possible. Some implications could arrive with non-public persons having identifiable traits in photos/videos, such as name, age, address, profession. These rare cases were coded in a residual GDPR category, on demand from Norwegian Center of Research Data (NSD). Further conditions from NSD stated that the dataset was not to be stored on a private laptop, smartphone, or any other private devices. The dataset was maintained on the servers of NTNU. This was to reduce the risk of hacking or other leaks of sensitive data. Besides these precautions we also used a VPN connected to NTNU when working with the dataset off campus. Lastly, there was some reflection on how this thesis may be received in the aftermath of its possible publication. There is always a discussion to be held as to how one chooses to present data. A criticism towards this thesis could be that its aim is too 'sensational' in ranking parties' use of populism beside one another. I strongly oppose this notion. It would not be acceptable not to publish the findings about the respective parties, even if some of the parties and their representatives might dislike or even denounce them. Although the findings in the next chapter can be misused and taken out of context, as all findings in this scientific field, the importance of this subject weighs much larger than the subsequent response to this thesis. One can argue that this research is a decent reflection of how parties have chosen to portray themselves – whether they are objectively populist or not in their actual policies or communication outside the realm of election campaigning. All coders (including myself) contributing to the dataset received an hourly salary from the institute of sociology and political science at NTNU. I explicitly declare no conflict of interest in this master thesis, and that findings will be presented as truthful and objective as possible.

4. RESULTS

This chapter will focus on the findings in the dataset. In order to present them accurately, crosstabs have been chosen in presenting performances in populist rhetoric by each party. Firstly, the amount of populism in total for all the parties needs to be addressed. Subsequently, the dimensions of populist rhetoric will follow. After the results has been accounted for, I will attempt to answer my main research question for this study, along with the follow-up research questions and hypotheses. These will be structured in chronological order. Every single main category of populism is visible in the following tables. When analysing populism there has been no separation between Instagram and Facebook posts when looking at the totality of numbers and percentages between parties. The main reason for this is the few cases of populism. Thus, it makes sense to merge Instagram and Facebook together when measuring the respective parties use of populism. There will later be a sub-chapter on how the different platforms performed in frequency of populist content and the differences with Facebook and Instagram in terms of how often parties used them and how they differ in terms of populism. These tables in the following subchapters will not involve in-depth information about the political parties. All in all, there were only three cases in the dataset that was marked as "missing". This is likely three posts that were deleted sometime after they were published for unknown reasons. This does not magnitude a significant proportion of deleted posts.

4.1 USE OF POPULIST RHETORIC IN GENERAL

The first thing that needs to be established is how much parties lean on populism in total (not to be confused with complete populism). Therefore, the first sighting will be aimed investigating how much populism each of the parties uses all in all. The numbers presented will not specify which part of the populist definition each party uses, as this will be delved into later in a complementary table.

TABLE 3: POPULISM BY PARTIES

Political parties	Total posts (N=1042)	Posts including populism (n= 122)	Posts including populism %
Arbeiderpartiet	133	21	15.8
Høyre	129	5	3.9
Senterpartiet	49	2	4.7
Fremskrittspartiet	79	11	13.9
Sosialistisk Venstreparti	153	20	14.7
Rødt	202	42	20.9
Venstre	83	-	-
Miljøpartiet De Grønne	91	5	5.5
Kristelig Folkeparti	48	2	4.2
Pasientfokus	76	15	19.7
All parties	1042	122	11.7

Cramer's V .226

Table 3 shows a summary of all the categories in total. It provides more information with considerably bigger numbers to evaluate the totality of populism's influence on Norwegian parties. It is visually structured from biggest party with most seats in parliament at the top (Ap), to smallest party with fewest seats at the bottom (Pasientfokus). Table 3 shows the exact number of posts each party sent out on Facebook and Instagram combined during the election campaign, how many of them had one or several populist traits, and the percentage of how many of the total posts were populist to any extent. Alongside all parties there are a few that lean on populist rhetoric than others.

As for the main research question for this thesis: "Which role did populism play in Norwegian parties' election campaigns on Facebook and Instagram during the 2021 national election campaign?": The Cramer's V value at .226 below Table 3 tells that there is weak statistical relationship between the two variables of all the political parties and the use of populism. Hence, it shows from as statistical viewpoint that this was not a very populist campaign on social media. On average, 11.7% of all posts contain any form of populism, which also backs up the notion that this was not a very contributing or defining factor of the 2021 election. This is not to say that populism did not play a role at all. On average this means that every tenth posts by a political party in Norway has some populism in them. We can see a relatively strong variation across parties. As we can see in Table 3, R is the party with most posts in general is marginally most populist in total, having populist content in 20.9 % their posts. They are followed by PF who have 19.7 % populism in total. This is an interesting discovery, since PF is a political party with little to no former political history or research on them (specially not in the context of populism). This therefore might be the very first indication of how they perform

in this respect – or even at any communicative dimensions. They are followed by Ap (15.8 %), SV (14.7 %), and then, somewhat in contrast with the predications of H1, FrP (13.9 %). After the mentioned top five, we see a big gap in use of populism with MDG (5.5 %), Sp (4.7 %), KrF (4.2 %), H (3.9%), and lastly V with 0 % populism. In light of these results, there are two hypotheses that can be answered. Firstly, H1: "The more ideologically radical a party is (both left/right), the more strongly it uses populist rhetoric". As we have already established R and FrP to be the most radical parties on each block in Figure 2 and Table 2 (Roouduijn et. al, 2019), the premise is solely based on left/right-wing populism, this hypothesis has been disproven. As predicted, R, as both a far-left and oppositional party showed a relatively big frequency of populist content. However, FrP on the other side of the spectrum, at the far-right (also oppositional) has been measured as only the fifth most populist party in percentage of posts. The basis for H1 to be correct is that both FrP and R should be among the most frequent users of populist communication. As that is only true in the case the left side of the axis with R, the hypothesis is disproven. Although FrP was the dominant party in terms of populism among the parties on the right, they show a moderate use of populist rhetoric when compared to all other nine parties. H1, although based on empirical studies and literature, could not be proven in that dataset. In the discussion, FrP's seemingly low use of populist content will be accounted for, as this is a central and important finding.
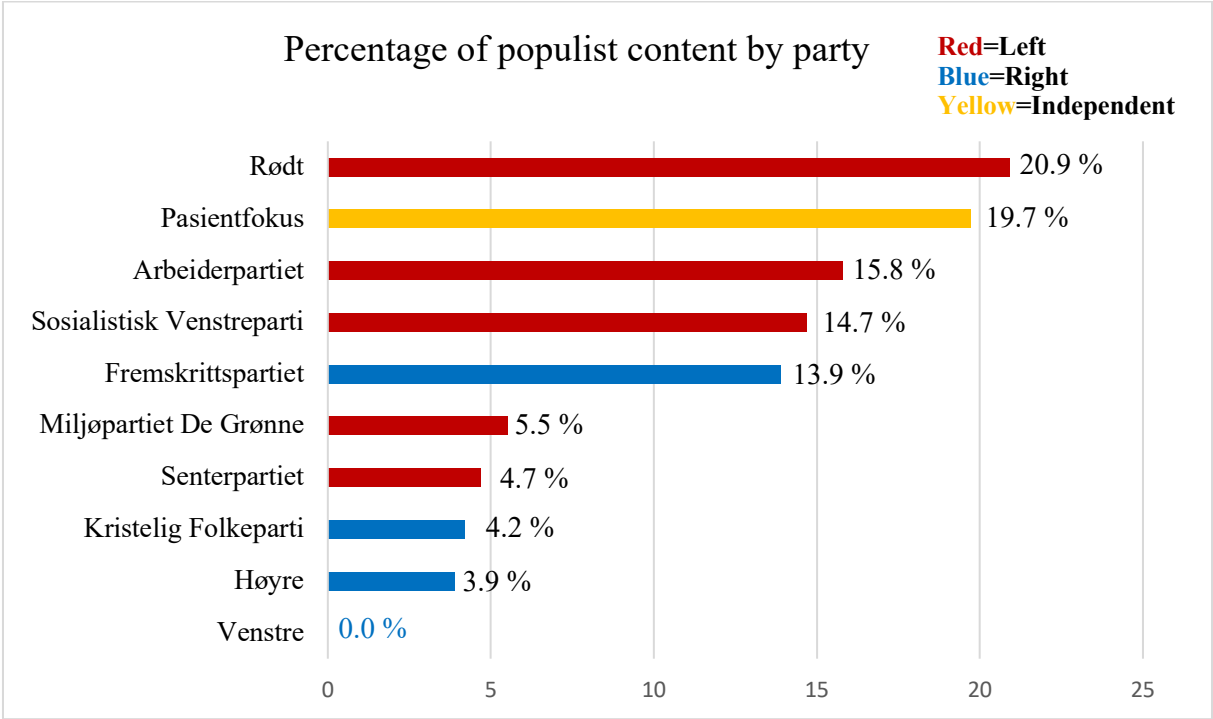

FIGURE 3: PERCENTAGE OF POPULIST CONTENT BY PARTIES

Figure 2 shows the same numbers as Table 3, but with colors at the bars representing the party's placement at the political sphere, and in order from least populist to most. To clarify, the % in this graph show the percentage of how many of the posts each party published contained populism in them – not the percentage of all populism in the dataset. What this visual diagram quite clearly tells us, is that parties on the left use populism to a much larger extent than the parties on the right. This illustration will be helpful when answering H2: "The use of populist rhetoric is more common among opposition parties than governing parties". Given that all governing parties are the bottom three with KrF (4.2 %) , Høyre (3.9 %) and Venstre (0 %) compared to the top three oppositional parties with Rødt (20.9 %), Ap (15.8 %) and SV (14.7 %), this hypothesis is indeed correct. Even Sp, the least populist left-leaning party according to the data exceeded the governing parties in percentage of populism with 4.7 %. Arguably, PF could be interpreted as the second most populist oppositional party. However, due to their ambiguity on which political side they supported, they are not included as a part of findings with oppositional parties compared to governing ones.

In the introduction, it was stated that every party uses populism to a certain extent. Venstre having zero cases is therefore interesting. This makes them the only party to not have any documented cases of online populism. The discovery of Venstre not having any populism is therefore significant. It may tell us something about their political communication during the span of the campaign, and how differs from all the other parties. It is thereby worth noting that as a governing party, they were also less likely to use populism, according to H2. With 83 posts in total, they are the sixth most active user on social media by all ten parties. Among the 10 parties, one with high frequency rate of populism is Ap, with 15.8 % of their content being populist, giving them the third highest frequency in terms of populist communication. A natural cause for Ap's relatively high amount of populism is that challenger-parties (parties in opposition), whether populist or not, tend to use populism to a higher degree than their governing rivals (Mudde, 2004). It is therefore not unprecedented that the largest oppositional party in size would have a somewhat high frequency of populism, also taking into account that Ap, with a long history as a governing party, has been eight years in opposition. This also echoes Engesser et al (2017) which also found that social democrats, such as The Labour Party in the UK, also showed populist tendencies to a larger extent. Empirical findings from other countries could therefore suggests that large parties such as Ap are not unfamiliar with actively using populism in their campaigning.

4.2 DIMENSIONS OF POPULISM

Since which parties used the greatest amount of populism has been established, it is vital to go more in depth as to what type of populism is being used by the different parties and how they differ in this respect. For this subchapter, there have been no predictions as to what type of populism the parties use. This also covers all the dimension that defines the different types of populism (Mudde, 2004) (Reinemann et. al, 2017).

TABLE 4: DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF POPULISM USED

Political parties	Posts n	Criticism of the elite % (n)	Reference to the people % (n)	Dangerous others % (n)	Complete populism % (n)
Arbeiderpartiet	133	10.5 (14)	9.0 (12)	0.8 (1)	-
Høyre	129	3.1 (4)	1.3 (1)	2.3 (3)	-
Senterpartiet	49	-	2.0 (1)	-	-
Fremskrittspartiet	79	7.6 (6)	1.3 (1)	13.9 (11)	1.3 (1)
Sosialistisk Venstreparti	153	9.2 (14)	2.6 (4)	2.0 (3)	-
Rødt	201	18.4 (37)	4.0 (8)	1.0 (2)	-
Venstre	83	-	-	-	-
Miljøpartiet De Grønne	91	5.5 (5)	-	-	-
Kristelig Folkeparti	48	4.2 (2)	-	-	-
Pasientfokus	76	14.5 (11)	13.2 (10)	1.3 (1)	1.3 (1)
All parties	1042	8.9 (93)	3.6 (37)	2.0 (21)	0.19 (2)
Cramer's V		.212	.208	.249	

Due to the many categories covered in this table, total cases are presented in brackets following the percentages. The different, more detailed categories of criticism and dangerous others were combined/recoded into the overarching categories here since the numbers were too small for more detailed analyses. Meaning that categories for all the different elites are combined, as well as the different categories from blaming, which could either be simply blaming an elite (criticsim1), accusing the elite of people's grievances and acting against the interest of the people (criticism2), calling for resistance against the elite (criticism3) or questioning the elites legitimacy to take power (criticism). All of these mentioned variables were re-coded into one variable. The same is the case with the categories of different elites. As "reference to the people" is only one category, it is not affected with recoding (also the variable had enough cases to be included on its own). The key findings present here are the preferred 'style' of populist communication among left/right-parties in Table 4. The categories present are the three main dimension of populism. Critique of the elites (economic, political, bureaucratical, the news media), claiming to speak the will of the people, and warning about the danger a rivalling party

or side, (left/right) or cultural group represents. Ap and Rødt are among the most populist in terms of criticism towards elites, whereas FrP almost explicitly uses the dangerous others-dimension, with 13.9 % of all they're post having this dimension present. They are in a great majority of using and the only party that somewhat consistently uses this dimension, followed by Høyre with a significantly lower 2.3 %. Høyre also have a matchable frequency and percentage of mentions of dangerous others. Even more so than SV and Rødt. This could indicate that these tactics in form of warning about the political rivals is more common with parties in the political right. This is a natural finding, given that criticisms from the oppositional left is often aimed at past performance by a governing politician or party, whereas mentions of dangerous others is promptly used as a warning or critique of someone's future performance, if elected. Therefore, it is likely more commonly used on the political right. In other words: the table show a clear dynamic between opposition and government and how they differ in their populist communication. FrP and Pasientfokus are the only parties where a single case of complete populism was found. As mentioned, complete populism meaning posts that have all three populist dimensions present. This is however only due to one instance for both parties. It is therefore nearly impossible to interpret numbers as small as these. It mainly shows that both the parties are capable of complete populism in very rare instances. Hence, what is visible here is that all three dimensions of populism are often used by parties, but almost never at the same time. Empty populism, with only references to the people (Aalberg & de Vreese, 2017) is therefore not a tendency among any of the 10 parties.

Traditional right-wing populism, which often involves distrust and attacks towards the news media (Gerbaudo, 2018), is almost non-existent, with only one individual case in total, and coming from independent Pasientfokus – rather than any of the parties on the right. The case of Pasientfokus. Table 3 and Table 4 both suggests that my third hypothesis, H3: "Smaller parties use populism more commonly than mid-size or large parties", is partially a valid one, as the smallest party in the entire parliament is also the second most populist.

4.3 ELECTION TOPICS

Since all the parties have been thoroughly investigated for what dimensions of populism they use, and how they use it, it is also important to see which election topics that sparked most debate in if any of them correlates with the biggest amount of populism. For the upcoming table, there are some requirements for each respective subject. Firstly, an issue should have at

least 20 mentions when looking at whether there is populism contained or not. This is to exclude topics that could have a big percentage of populism but are rarely mentioned, as such results can be misleading and to avoid any coincidences and weak resonations. Furthermore, some of the variables presents are merged from several categories with similar traits. For instance, civil rights (topic470) are merged with the variables of gender policy (topic471) and LGTBTQ+ policies (topic472). The same goes for 'Health' (topic321) and 'COVID-19 related issues' (topic3229. All categories used in the thesis can be found in appendix. A few defining features of the 2021 elections were among these three topics: Health policies (such as interest of health workers and Covid-19-related issues), climate change, and the growth of economic class differences among Norway's citizens. Clearly, according to the findings in the dataset, this was an election that mostly prioritized climate, environmental and energy policy, as it is mentioned or referred to coded 310 times totally. It did not correlate particularly well with populism, with only 9.4 % of all posts about climate or energy policies having some populist maneuvers in the way they were communicated. This is also another indication on the campaign not being a very populist one. Although this may seem like a good indication of what interest the people had during this election, it is important to remember that the parties had the defining power on which topics that were mentioned.

TABLE 5: ELECTION TOPICS AND PERCENTAGE OF POPULISM

Political topics	Times mentioned (N=1042)	Populism contained % (n)	Cramer's V
Labour policies	49	28.6 (14)	.117
Economic inequality	175	23.4 (41)	.164
Economy and finance	47	21.3 (10)	.062
Immigration and integration policy	48	20.8 (10)	.062
Foreign policy	70	20.0 (14)	.069
Taxes	98	19.4 (19)	.077
Health (including Covid-19)	249	15.3 (38)	.062
Education and research policy	142	12.0 (17)	.003
Politics for senior citizens	50	10.0 (5)	.012
Transport and infrastructure	71	11.3 (8)	.004
Environmental and energy policy	310	9.4 (29)	.048
Rural policy	73	5.5 (4)	.053
Civil rights	41	4.9 (2)	.043
All categories [a]	**1174**	**13.8 (178)**	

[a] Times each category was coded

Table 5 differs to any of the other tables presented thus far. N=1042, yet the total mentions of all categories were at 1174, and populism contained in total 178 cases of populism, rather than 122, compared to the other tables. This is due to several of the categories being coded in the same post. For instance: a post where economic inequality was mentioned, could also contain a mention of taxes or rural policy or all three. Therefore, the total value exceeds N, but the percentage, which is the most essential factor when analysing results, stays consistent. Some of the variables presented here have been recoded and merged with other variables with similar topics. Unlike Table 3 and Table 4, Table 5 has Cramer's V implemented with each topic. There are no strong relationships between a political topic and use of populism, but economic inequality has the biggest value in this correlation test with .164. There are several indications we get from these findings. Although the election of 2021 was an election were climate and environmental politics were often mentioned, parties remained relatively shy to use populism in this debate, with only 9.4 % of posts regarding climate change, '*det grønne skiftet' (the green shift)*, gas and energy prices or other environmental topics. Another clear indication is how much economic inequality was discussed, and that 23.4 % of posts discussing the topic used some form of populism. This also fits well with labour and social issues, which was mentioned almost not nearly as frequent with 49 mentions or references in total and the highest percentage of 28.6 % of posts being populist. Therefore, the answer to RQ2: "Which topics political topics sparked most populism?", the most most populist topics were as according to Table 5: Labour policies, economic inequality, economy and finance, immigration and integration policy and foreign policy. All of these topics had a 20 % or more in terms of populism.

Some correlations here seem to be that there is no strong correlation between most mentioned topics and populism, as environmental and energy issues where the dominant topic yet still only contains 9.4 % of populism in total. The same with health matters, which was the second biggest category. Populism amounts to roughly 9.4 % in that category. This suggests that the more dominant subjects were not particular prone to populism, compared to somewhat smaller topics like economic inequality, labour policy, or foreign policies. At least not to a very large extent.

TABLE 6: POLITICAL TOPICS AND AMOUNT OF POPULIST DIMENSIONS

Political topic (N=1042)	Dim. 0 % (n)	Dim. 1 % (n)	Dim. 2 % (n)	Dim. 3 % (n)	Cramer's V
Labour policies	84.9 (35)	18.4 (9)	10.2 (5)	-	.137
Economic inequality	76.6 (134)	20.0 (35)	2.9 (5)	0.6 (1)	.176
Economy and finance	78.7 (37)	12.8 (6)	6.4 (3)	2.1 (1)	.116
Immigration and integration policy	79.2 (38)	10.4 (5)	10.4 (5)	-	.065
Foreign policy	80.0 (56)	17.1 (12)	2.9 (2)	-	.117
Taxes	80.6 (79)	14.3 (14)	5.1 (5)	-	.084
Health (including Covid-19)	84.7 (211)	11.2 (28)	3.6 (9)	0.4 (1)	.068
Education and research policy	88.0 (125)	10.6 (15)	1.4 (2)	-	.036
Politics for senior citizens	90.0 (45)	8.0 (4)	2.0 (1)	-	.015
Transport and infrastructure	88.7 (63)	8.5 (6)	1.4 (1)	1.4 (1)	.077
Environmental and energy policy	90.6 (281)	7.4 (23)	1.6 (5)	0.3 (1)	.055
Rural policy	94.5 (69)	2.7 (2)	1.4 (1)	1.4 (1)	.097
Civil rights	95.1 (39)	4.9 (2)	-	-	.046
Total: 14.8 (1422)	**85.2 (1212)**	**11.3 (161)**	**3.1 (44)**	**0.4 (5)**	

Dim. = Dimension.

Table 6 shows exactly how many dimensions of populism (regardless of which ones) were present with the different election topics. Dim. 0 shows how many posts that did not contain any populism. When introducing populism compared to topics in several dimensions, the Cramer's V does slightly alter in results. However, there is no strong relationship between the topics and use of populism, with 'Economic inequality' again showing the biggest correlation, with .176. This is, as the former table, a weak statistical link between the different topic and variables of populism. Again, since some of these may be coded in the same posts, the totality of cases for both populism and the topics exceeds from earlier tables. The total percentage of populism has also increased 1% compared to Table 5, and stands at 14.8 % in total according to Table 6. 1422. Something mentioned in Dim. 2 and Dim. 3 is bound to be mentioned in Dim. 1. The total mention of each subject is therefore 1422. Dim. 0 is an empty category measuring how many percentages of the different posts with 0 as value in terms of populism. As earlier stated, there were only few occurrences of complete populism, as also presented in Dim. 3. However, it is not visible which categories that were used the few times complete populism was found, amounting to 0.4 %, again exemplifying that complete populism was a very rare phenomenon during the election.

4.4 FINDINGS WITH FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

As a conclusive chapter to the results, it is useful to see whether the platforms of Facebook and Instagram performed any differently regarding populist content. Empirically, as stated in

chapter 2.4.1 there is not a whole lot of empirical findings on Instagram in the context of populism, or at least not to the same extent as with the case of Facebook. We see clearly that Facebook is still the preferred platform on social media in large by parties alike. Facebook posts consisted 69.9 % of the posts in the dataset.

TABLE 7: POPULISM ON FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

Social medium	Total posts % (N=1042)	Posts with populism % (n=122)
Facebook	69.3 (722)	11.8 (85)
Instagram	30.7 (320)	11.6 (37)
Total	**100.0 (1042)**	**23.4 (122)**

Cramer's V .003.

This table showcases populism coded on the two different platforms under investigation. What is somewhat remarkable here is that by percentage they perform almost identically. Of all content we coded, Facebook had 11.8 % of populist content within it. Instagram lays just behind with 11.6 % of its total content by the parties being populist. A margin of 0.02 %. This is an incredibly small margin that showcases that there is little to none difference in how populist content is distributed by these two apps. Even if the layout of Facebook and Instagram is somewhat different, and is used for different purposes, political communication, or rather populist communication is not noticeably affected by this. It also shows that Instagram has there very same potential as a platform for populist content as Facebook does. Cramer's V shows the relationship between the sender (Facebook and Instagram) and whether the content was populist or not. The value at .003 tells us that there is a very weak correlation between the two variables, and quantifiably shows that populism did not have a large effect on the posts in total. Although Facebook has justifiably come under scrutiny for its role in the role in politics and democratic effect on its users (Kalsnes & Pettersen, 2019), Instagram has likely proven it is just as capable to affect its users politically. A key component to remember here, that also could explain the similarity in percentage, is that identical posts are often displayed over several platforms.

TABLE 8: DIMENSIONS OF POPULISM: FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM

Social medium	Total posts % (N=1042)	Criticism of the elite % (n)	Reference to the people % (n)	Dangerous others % (n)	Complete populism % (n)
Facebook	69.3 (722)	8.7 (63)	3.9 (28)	2.4 (17)	0.3(2)
Instagram	30.7 (320)	9.7 (30)	2.8 (9)	1.3 (4)	-
Total	**100 (1042**	**8.9 (93)**	**3.6 (37)**	**2.0(21)**	**0.2 (2)**

Cramer's V .027

Table 7 clearly show that the different dimensions of populism were spread across individual posts, and when we differentiate them in this way, the numbers to work with are quite small. The first thing to notice is that among all 10 parties, Facebook is strongly the most preferred platform for their communication, as Facebook content makes up 69.3 % (722 posts) of the dataset compared to Instgram accounting for 30.7 % (320 posts). The most common feature of populist dimensions was criticism of the elite with 8,9 % in all posts in total. With regards to complete populism, this only amounts to 0.2 % of all content. Two cases in total, is as previously stated too few to draw any conclusions, both when it comes to parties, but equally true when discussing the different apps. As seen in Table 8, Facebook and Instagram seem to echo each other in the percentage of the different dimensions. Of all the categories, Facebook only have a larger percentage with margin of around 1%. What becomes clear when showing the different categories in this manner, is that populism was very limited across each category and the election in total. To conclude with answering RQ3: "How does Facebook and Instagram differ in terms of percentage of populism – if at all?". As mentioned, there are only few factors that separates them. Table 7 and Table 8 show that Facebook, percentagewise has a slightly bigger percentage of populism, with 0.02 %. This would therefore suggest that they are equal, in most categories of populism, as this margin is very small. While that is mostly true, Facebook is the only app containing cases of complete populism, which is also the only thing that makes then differ in terms of the phenomenon. Since complete populism is so rare in the dataset, this finding is not significant enough to separate the two in any substantial way. The only other difference is that there is a margin on roughly 1.0 or 1.1 % dividing them in all the categories. To conclude, there a few margins that separates Facebook from Instagram in terms of populist rhetoric being used. In fact, astoundingly close to identical in this respect.

5. DISCUSSION

This thesis aimed at finding out how each Norwegian parties in parliament used populism on Instagram and Facebook. This is a relevant topic since research on populism, explicit use of it by politicians (either populist or not), and interest of the subject has increased enormously over the last decade. Norway as a case is a special one as well, as it is among the richest countries with a low unemployment rate and big trust in institutions. In terms of lack of studies comparing this many parties to one another and quantitively measuring populism is unusual in a Norwegian context. To answer the Research question and test the hypotheses, I conducted a quantitative content analysis of 1,042 individual Facebook and Instagram posts. Several of the findings are both unexpected, complicated and have possibly alternate explanations. Therefore, they need further resonation to be understood. Introductive, I will attempt the answer all my research questions and hypothesis'. Then I will discuss in some depth the party with the biggest and smallest frequency of populist rhetoric. But firstly, the choice of method and how it might have affected the findings:

There is little to suggests that there have been irregularities when coding the different parties. They have been interpreted with strict rules. All variables used in the crosstabs passed the reliability tests of BP. Kappa The reliability tests in terms of coding mentioned in the method show a high correlation between all three coders (regarding variables used in crosstabs), suggesting that we were all in agreement when interpreting populism. As correlating normative behaviour of three individuals is not very likely, added with the supervision of the institute, it is safe to suggests that wrongful coding and errors in measurements did not affect the results discussed in this chapter to that extent that parties have been misrepresented.

5.1 THE ROLE OF POPULISM IN THE NORWEGIAN 2021 ELECTION

Our main findings are that among all parties, Rødt use populist rhetoric more often on social media than any other party. We also see that Facebook and Instagram show little to no difference in frequency of populist content by all parties. Of course, the numbers cannot explain everything, but beneath them there will be some qualified suggestions based on empirical evidence as to why some of the parties performed as they did in with their political communication. This segment will mainly focus on the most exclusive findings in this thesis and how they can be explained to a certain extent. Before we can delve further into what the findings tell us, there are some necessities that need to be clarified. There are distinctive differences when it comes to populism and in the context of thicker ideologies (Dzur &

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Hendricks, 2018). Left-wing and Right-wing populism are fundamentally different and comparing the two terms side by side, in this manner is difficult when accounting for their many differences. Where the left-wing more often tends to accuse the richest in society and the privileged for people's grievances, the right-wing tend to be more focused on blaming other minority groups, often to cultural differences or even ethnicity. Populism is not a very present phenomenon in Norwegian campaigning. The common tendency for Norwegian campaigns is that most of populism used by parties on social media is thin (contains only one dimension, sometimes two, rarely three). There are rare exceptions to this, with two cases of complete populism over 1042 posts. This only makes up 0.2 % of all posts. The overall impression is that populist rhetoric is used with mostly just one, and sometimes two populist dimensions. From far-left parties, to centrist-left and a significant part of the political right. Even among the parties that scored the highest in the tables, populism manifests a relatively small percentage of their campaign strategy in total.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

I will also reflect on some of the shortcomings with choice of method and some of the weaker aspects of this study. An obvious shortcoming to the study in general, is that social media campaigning alone does not paint the whole picture of political campaigns, appearances, and especially not political practices. This is also the case when looking at populist tendencies. A party could theoretically behave populist on other external media platforms (TV debates, radio, newspapers, party programs) and act somewhat moderate on social media, and vice versa. The findings is therefore not necessarily a waterproof indication of which parties that are most populist in total. This aspect falls into the ongoing debate to whether populism is an ideology or a communication-style. There were also limitations in coding populism, as videos had a time limit on one minute for videos. This means that if a video contained populist content after the first minute, it would not be coded. It is also worth noting that campaigning is often superficial and pretentious at times and only introduces small fragments of a political party's actual policies and identity. That put aside there is a clear tendency to how each party chose to portray themselves with the key findings in the data. Another aspect is that this thesis follows a very concrete theoretical approach to how populism is to be interpreted and coded, which means that if a new definition should establish a whole consensus of the term populism in later years, the study conducted could have less relevance over time.

5.3 FINDINGS WITH POLITICAL PARTIES

This part will delve deeper into some of the parties and their performance of populism. First off is the party that was quantifiably the most populist according to the data: Rødt. As Rødt is seemingly the most populist party, we need to establish some of the factors into play for why Rødt comes out the way they do:

1) **Eight-year of conservative governing**: This was an election where Rødt represented the perhaps most vocal voice of an eight-year-old oppositional left. As H1 successfully predicted(and to a certain degree H2), populism occurred more frequently with oppositional parties. It is therefore not unprecedented that the perhaps clearest party in opposition, with most radically different political views than the conservative led government, is also the one with the biggest amount of populism all in all. Historically speaking, a government in Norway has never been re-elected three times, and Rødt as the most obvious oppositional party was almost certain to raise heavy criticism to the government and their performances over the last decade. It is also somewhat typical that the political center of gravity moves towards the opposite side after the left or right has ruled for two periods. This is quite normal and can be found in most of western democracies. Also, the variants of populism that Rødt uses would most certainly resonate with voters who were dissatisfied with the current government or swing voters.

2) **Election topics**: The election campaign of 2021 was largely affected by the notion of an increasing economic inequality between Norwegian citizens, which was a big advantage for the far-left parties such as Rødt and SV (who both used a populist angle in this election topic). The subject of economic inequality was also among the most populist topics, with 23.4 % of all posts on the topic being populist. Labour policies, another of Rødt's election was the most populist topic with 28.6 % of all post having populist content in them.

3) **Fragmented party landscape**: The election of 2021 represents a more diverse range of political parties than seen in earlier elections in Norway. Never before has the votes been spread across such a big number of parties in the mainstream. The fall of traditional party identification has most likely given Rødt a new group of potential voters, and to what extent populism helped them to achieve that is uncertain.

4) **Most active user of social media**: Given Rødt's large activity over the course of one month (202 post in total), they were statistically more likely to have more populism than other parties with fewer posts.

It is also worth noting that Rødt were also considered to be among the winners of this election. Securing eight seats in parliament and their best election results of all time with an increase of 2.3 % of the vote from 2017, nearly doubling their support from four years prior (Garvik, 2022). The question then becomes: did Rødt benefit from their populist communication, or are there other factors that can explain their sudden rise? While the latter may be true to some extent, there is little to suggest that Rødt were in any capacity set back by their populist communication. On the contrary, this may even have had an impact on their growth as a party. Their main ideas of institutional socialism with international solidarity were undoubtedly combined with a conscious and strategic thin populism (Mudde, 2004). This could explain how their popularity rose significantly from 2017 to 2021. Not to say that they have never leaned on populist rhetoric before. They undoubtably have. Needless to say, we do not possess similar data for previous elections, which also mean we cannot compare parties use of populism or frequency of posting on social media and how populist they have been in their communication prior to the 2021 election. Besides that, Rødt's campaign strategy with a high frequency of post (201 in the span of a month) suggests that they have succeeded with the online campaign strategy in general, whether it is due to populism or not. Hence, the discussion forward could be, based on the findings, whether Rødt deserves a new label, as a socialist-populist party. And if so – does that mean that they are the only political party in Norway that categorically qualifies as populist? The short answer for that is no. There are many other variables this study has not taken into account when measuring populism. These could in theory give more clear indication of populism in a party's activities both online and offline, which could shift the results presented here in another direction. Several of the other parties one would intuitively think would have a higher frequency of populism, may have other aspects of populist communication that obviously has not been taken substantially into account here. This could be statements made in debates, in interviews, or in the party program. Another explanation could be that how we use populism in daily speech does not match the academic criteria of what mandates populism. Further elaborations on this in the following chapter.

An observation that could spark some interest is the major difference in both degrees of populism of the far-right party of FrP compared to Rødt. FrP, who have been historically labeled as a populist party (Jupskås, 2017), (Roouduijn et. al, 2019) show a moderate frequency of populism in their posts, although they have (barely) all three dimensions present. This may suggest that the argument of Jenssen (2017) about FrP not qualifying as a populist party is still

a valid one four years later, or possibly even more so in the context of the 2021 election, since one of the main criticisms aimed towards them is almost non-existent in the findings. This is based on the data alone, and the fact that their social media campaign is not populist does not necessarily mean that the party in itself is not populist. Jenssen (2017) argued that the criteria of Jagers & Welgrave (2007) was not applicable to modern day FrP. Even though this argument is not only based on social media activity, but this notion also seems to be the case on the findings of FrP when investigating their online behaviour on Facebook and Instagram. This study can therefore shed a light over the arguments of Jenssen (2017) and Jupskås (2017) on whether FrP is a populist party or not. As FrP only show one single case of complete populism over the span of one month campaigning, being the fifth most populist party in total based on percentage, and almost only relying on one populist dimension (dangerous others), the only feasible conclusion is that FrP cannot justifiably be categorized as a populist party based on their online communication. The numbers say little to suggest that FrP are any more populist than other parties such as Rødt, SV and Ap. Although this dataset alone cannot categorically say for certain whether a party is populist or not, there is few things to suggest so in the curious case of FrP.

Sp were among parties with lowest percentage of populism, which is also a somewhat surprising finding. As they have been commonly criticized over the last years among scholars and political pundits for showing quite prominent populist tendencies as a nationalistic left-populist party with appeals to the people about the right of self-determination and heavily leaning on the battle centrum and periphery (Hvidsten, 2019), and the second biggest oppositional party after Ap, one would intuitively think they would show a much higher frequency of populist messaging than they eventually did. The findings show, with their almost non-existent use of this tool in their campaigning, that the 'populist' communication they allegedly practice is unused on Facebook and Instagram.

 While Rødt seems to have gained a substantial number of voters, Ap, who were among the most populist party on social media, went down 1.1 % from last election. While there are many factors at play, this could insinuate that their communicative tactics were not successful in strengthening their position as the largest political party. This is of course not simply only due to their use of populism alone. Ap most likely had many external factors contributing to a somewhat disappointing election result, as they have been on the decline in every election since 2009. Another reason that is not based on either their policies, communication, or appeal, is the factor that the bigger party landscape has perhaps made it nearly impossible to reach 30 %. To

say that Ap's use of populism on social media contributed to that is speculative at best. Even so, one can never underestimate the role social media plays in political campaigns and which strategies political parties use to mobilize votes. In Ap's case the biggest use of populism of were the three: Blaming the elites, mentions of political elites, and referencing, "we, the people " (categories available in appendix). In the latter category, they were the second most populist party with 9 % in total, meaning that the populism they used was mostly the dimensions as often seen at the political left, rather than centrist populism (2018). This may be due to the case of the Ap's slogan for the 2021 campaign "*nå er det vanlige folks tur*" (now it is the time for ordinary people). This sort of campaigning may have contributed to their posts trying to communicate the will of the people, or '*volonté générale'* (Mudde, 2004) in their political messaging. Not necessarily due to the slogan in itself, but the further contextualization for what they mean with "ordinary people ", and how this group allegedly has been trivialized in the past years. The premise also sets up a narrative between "the people" and "the elite". This slogan is also echoing the famous "for folk flest" (for most people) which is often used by one of Ap's biggest political rivals in the FrP (Garvik, 2022).

PF is (according to the data) the second most populist party on online communication. This in their first political campaign in history. It is difficult to rely on any empirical research to give more depth to anything but the numbers. Therefore, all interpretations on their performance are based on the dataset alone along with the political context of their brief history and campaign, while some empirical comparisons could be necessary.

Arguably, there is very little empirical grounding to interpret whether they consequentially were populist in their online posts. Although it is true that newer parties more often use clear tactics to appeal to their audience, showcasing what separates them from the other parties. It is therefore not unlikely that, given the context, they used populism for visibility. Another aspect is that local parties may well be more populist in nature compared to national parties. PF is a new small niche party with limited resources and experience in both political communication and election campaigning, leaning mostly on Facebook statuses signed by their top candidate. However, it is not completely unheard of "unprofessional" campaigns in Norway being successful. In 2001, SV made little or no use of external professionals at all in their communication. They relied on about eight persons, professionals in the PR, advertising, and communications business who sympathized with the party, a small fraction compared to the PR resources other parties possessed (Karlsen, 2010, p. 206). SV ended up as the fourth biggest party that very year. This is reminiscent to PF in some respects, although campaigns have

changed significantly over the last 20 years. In regard to Pasientfokus' use of populism, they do not quite fit the frame of a traditional challenger-party. A challenger-party normally attempts to cease as much political power and influence as possible with a broad variety of core issues centered around a left/right/center-ideology. PF, on the other hand, is a party with interest in health policies in Finnmark county, not necessarily all of Norway in general. Their focus on one topic limited to one geographical area offers some ambiguity to how to categorize them based on empirical studies on populism. It is plausible that their high level of populist rhetoric may very well be a serendipitous outcome. On the other hand, this could be a tactical move for them in an attempt to get more exposure and shares in their posts. A third factor one needs to consider is that when coding PF, many of their posts contain a lot of information (mainly long texts). Making it more likely for their posts to trigger one or several populist categories.

The election performances of Høyre, Venstre and KrF were among the lowest in terms of populism. One can only speculate on how this was the central tendency among governing parties. It is reasonable to assume that when running for re-election, a government tends to highlight the positives with what they have achieved, rather than either a) use a greater amount of time and resources for populist campaigning to brand a political opponent as dangerous (although this was done to a rather small extent by Høyre), or b) communicate the will of the people against the elite – when oneself represent a massive political elite. Another interpretation is that the defining features of the election topics as of cases (environmental policies, health and economic inequality) was not beneficial for any of the governing parties to use populism as an effective tool in their communication. This is, however, just an educated interpretation. Of all three governing parties, the finding of Venstre having no populism at all in their posts is indeed fascinating. It was briefly mentioned in the introduction that every party and politician use populism to some extent, either briefly, moderately, or frequently. To see that a party did not use it in any form during the span of an election is unexpected and almost unprecedented. Although several were close to these results with a handful of cases of populism (KrF, Høyre, Sp, MDG), Venstre stands alone as the only party not to use any populism over the span of a month in digital campaigning.

7. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Populism is – and remains an enigma to be resolved. The vagueness is amongst the most discussed aspect with its effects in political discourse. This vagueness is either a big advantage for populist figures, or an existential headache for scholars researching the subject. That being said, the term should not be affiliated with the demagogic or extreme actors alone, since it is quite clear that its being used even in civilized political campaigns such as the Norwegian one. As The Norwegian election of 2021 showcased, populism is also a contributing factor to well-functioning democracies. Even though the conclusion is that Norwegian politics are not to a large extent shaped with categorically populist actors compared to other countries, such as Italy (Verbeek & Zaslove, 2019).

There is little to suggest that populism will not be a divisive topic in academic research for years to come. Where the biggest challenge for populism in future research is differentiating the academic term of what mandates populism, and the 'political slang' that is used in everyday speech. This is a fundamental distinction that should be common in the public sphere. Even if research on populism has increased over the last ten years or so, its meaning and definitions are not very clear in the public domain. This uncertainty of what populism is, is an attribute of great concern regarding public opinion and the future of online campaigning. If the 'brand' populist continues being used a frequently, it may lose all its substance, and society may struggle in recognizing populist actors and movements. Some might even suggest this is where we find ourselves as of today. If the social media algorithms will continue to work the way they do, either deliberately spreading populist content as argued by Gerbaudo (2018) or working in a somewhat unintended symbiosis with populist content (Hopster, 2021) the future of populism seems bright indeed.

As the findings in this thesis have established, Facebook is no longer the most obvious app to spread populist content, although it is most frequently used. Instagram share the same ratio of populism by percentage, and arguably have the same (if not greater) potential of being an important tool for populist politicians and movements in the coming years if future campaigning lean more towards Instagram, or if they are equally used by parties. Further research should also be focused on direct cause and effect on parties' use of populist rhetoric and if populism is a contributing factor to how parties perform during elections – either for positively or negatively. If there indeed is a correlation, this could say something about which parties depend on populist rhetoric to mobilize votes – and which ones that lose credibility and voters because

of it. A complementary study to this one should be executed for the 2025 election to see if the tendencies are that oppositional parties are the most populist, or if this is a stronger tendency on the Norwegian parties on the political left. As for now, thin populism in Norway is left leaning phenomenon. Whether that is to being in opposition or just the nature of the party's communication is yet unknown. Hence, a complementary study to this one after the next parliamentary election would give a larger input to this, and with other countries. As for now, to the extent that populism on social media affects Norwegians, it is a left leaning phenomenon, with an extended focus on economical elites, and targeted to the people who seemingly suffer from a growing social division between classes and economic inequality. As many of those preaching this message have strengthened their position, taking place in government (Ap) or with an increase of seats in parliament (SV, Rødt) the continuation for how they perform with populist communication in the future is interesting and unpredictable indeed.

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APPENDIX

Attachment 1: Categories of populism used in DigiWorld codebook:

B 8. Populism

The following categories on populism refer to the <u>entire</u> post, including the image(s)/videos, the caption, geo tags, hashtags and links.

All categories under B7. refer to the <u>entire</u> post, including the image(s)/videos, the caption, geo tags, hashtags and links. All categories present in a post are coded with 1, all categories not present in a post are coded with 0.

Populism is defined "as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people".[1]

The following criteria define populism:

- *Antagonism* between the people as a homogeneous group of common man and women on the one hand and the elite as a corrupt or incompetent groups of rulers that is not representing the people's will faithfully.
- Discrediting the elite, whose competences are called into question and who are held accountable for grievances.
- The legitimacy of elite power is denied or questioned.
- Political sovereignty should be handed back to the people. Power is claimed for the people.
- The people/citizens of the country are seen as a homogeneous unit.
- A clear demarcation from both political opponents and cultural dissenters, who are considered a threat to the interests of the people.
- A clear demarcation from political ideas defended by the elite and presented as the dominant ideology.

Populism is characterized by a rhetoric of exaggeration, which aims to create a sense of threat and calls for resistance to the treacherous plans of "the elite".

We analyze <u>only</u> the <u>manifest content</u> of a post.

The populist tendency of a post consists of a criticism of the elite while the speaker pretends to defend the interest of the people/the majority of citizens. Populism is known to occur in fragments:

1) generalized criticism of 'the elite' as a group
2) a reference to the unified people and their interests, either as a community, ethnic group or political actor or
3) the thematization of the dangerous others or a crisis rhetoric.

B8.1 Criticism [criticism] of elites

These categories analyze whether a post criticizes or attributes blame [criticism] to the elite [elites] *in a general way*.

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[1] Mudde, C. (2004). The Populist Zeitgeist. *Government & Opposition, 39*(3), 541-563 (here: p. 543).

Criticism includes:

- [criticism1] **Blaming the elite (from any sector)** as a group *in general* for problems and grievances that the people suffer. This category applies when elites are held responsible for anything undesirable from the people's perspective.
- [criticism2] **Questioning the elite's legitimacy to take decisions:** questioning of the legitimacy of the decision-making power exercised by the elite and asking for direct democracy (e.g., referenda; "A change of government can't be a Tory stitch-up, the people must decide!")
- [criticism3] **Calling for resistance against the elite and their ideas and direct popular decisions:** call for resistance against the ideas/ideology of the establishment
- [criticism4] **Accusing the elite of betraying the people or acting against the people's interest:** Accusing the elite of being corrupt, betraying the people or acting against the people's interest (e.g., "The media are the enemy of the people", "The media are dishonest and journalists are liars")

IMPORTANT: First, it must be coded <u>what kind of criticism</u> is included in the post [criticism], second the <u>target of this criticism</u> [elites] must be coded.

All categories present in a post are coded with "1", all categories not present are coded with "0".

Category	Description	Code
criticism1	**Blaming the elite (from any sector)** as a group *in general* for problems and grievances that the people suffer. This category applies when elites are held responsible for anything undesirable from the people's perspective.	0 1
criticism2	**Questioning the elite's legitimacy to take decisions** Questioning of the legitimacy of the decision-making power exercised by the elite and asking for direct democracy (e.g., referenda; "A change of government can't be a Tory stitch-up, the people must decide!")	0 1
criticism3	**Calling for resistance against the elite and their ideas and direct popular decisions** call for resistance against the ideas/ideology of the establishment	0 1
criticism	**Accusing the elite of betraying the people or acting against the people's interest** Accusing the elite of being corrupt, betraying the people or acting against the people's interest (e.g., "The media are	0 1

the enemy of the people", "The media are dishonest and journalists are liars")		

B8.2 To which elite is the critique addressed? [elite]

The elite are those forces and groups that represent what a speaker presents as the dominant ideology. The elite is addressed in general terms, in a simplified way. We code the following five elites separately for each type of criticism to find out whom the respective type of criticism addresses:

The elite are those forces and groups that represent what a speaker presents as the dominant ideology. The elite is addressed in general terms, in a simplified way. We code the following five elites separately for each type of criticism to find out whom the respective type of criticism addresses:

- [elite11] **Political actors/system:** politicians/rulers/political actors in general, also: supranational level (EU commission, UN high representatives etc.) (e.g., "For what are they honouring Merkel?")
- [elite12] **Bureaucrats and public administration:** Judiciary, state or supranational bureaucracy: such as elites from the judiciary system, the administration or the bureaucracy (e.g., "Michael's murder was known to the police a long time ago", "Berlin's social welfare office needs spit protection")
- [elite13] **Economic elite:** "the economy", large corporations, economic powers (including institutions such as rating agencies, IMF, WTO) (e.g. "What do we want to save: the climate or capitalism", "At the book fair today I discussed (...) his (...) book 'Rich mob. About the Monsters of Capitalism' and Criticism of Capitalism)
- [elite14] **The news media/legacy media, journalists, pundits and polling companies:** The media system, leading media organizations, journalism in general (e.g., "The press is a bunch of liars", "It's all fake what the media reports")
- [elite16] **Social media companies**
- [elite15] **Supranational elite (e.g., EU); Western world; 'Mainstream' world order**

Category	Description	Examples	Code
elite11	**Political actors** politicians/rulers/political actors in general	"Why are they honoring the president despite all the mistakes he made?"	0 1
elite12	**Bureaucrats and public administration** Judiciary, state or supranational bureaucracy: such as elites from the judiciary system, the administration or the bureaucracy	"Michael's murder was known to the police a long time ago. Why wasn't he arrested?", "Berlin's social welfare office needs spit protection"	0 1
elite13	**Economic elite**	"What do we want to save: the climate or capitalism?"	0 1

	Blaming corporations, large corporations, economic powers (including institutions such as rating agencies, IMF, WTO) **ATTENTION:** News media companies are not coded here but under [elite14]. Social media companies are not coded here but under [elite16].	"Amazon does not care about the climate."	
elite14	**The news media/legacy media, journalists, pundits and polling companies** The traditional media system, the press, leading news media organizations, journalism in general.	"The press is a bunch of liars", "It's all fake what the media reports"	0 1
elite16	**Social media companies** e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube	"Facebook / Twitter are liberals, support the Democratic Party and block only right-wingers (like Trump) or try to influence the election"	0 1
elite15	**Supranational elite (e.g., EU and UN); Western world; 'Mainstream' world order** EU commission, UN high representatives etc.		0 1

B8.3 Reference to the people [people]

Here we code whether the party or candidate which published the post appeals directly to "the people" as a community or as the political sovereign.

Key for the coding is:

- Reference is made to the people as a unit (a national community) in a political or ethnic sense.
- The use of terms such as "people", "will of the people", "our nation", "our country", name of the country (e.g., "the US", "Israel"), "the citizens" etc. It is important that such catchy words are used in order to generate a sense of community (e.g. not "we (as a party) want...").
- The people is portrayed as a social or political entity which is distinct from other entities such as "the elite" and "the others".
- Taking the side of the people/supporting the people (at least having the intention)/referring to being part of the people/presenting oneself as part of the people/speaking in the name of the people

A critical utterance/remark regarding the elite in the name of the people in a half-sentence is sufficient to code 1. If it is hard to make a decision, code 0.

Examples:

- "We are the only ones who represent the interests of the people."
- "We decide for ourselves who we let in!"
- "Are we threatened by a devastating poverty crisis?"

Category	Description	Code
people	References to "We, the people" not included or included	0 1

B8.4 References to "the dangerous others" [danger]

This category analyses whether groups which are not the elite are presented as antagonists of the people or separated/excluded from the people. Such groups can be ethnic or cultural minorities or people holding opinions portrayed as minority opinions.

The "dangerous others" are perceived as a threat to the people (as a community).

The term the "dangerous others" refers to:

- Segments of the people that are not part of the populists' imagined community of the people/population groups with characteristics that do not correspond to the populist ideal of the people
- Cultural outsiders are depicted as a major threat for the country's future
- Political opponents are depicted as a major threat for the country's future
- Ethnic minorities are depicted as a major threat for the country's future

It is important that the focus is on segments of the population that are regarded as enemies or as dangerous for the people's interests or wellbeing. It is not about being hostile to individuals.

Category	Description	Examples	Code
danger11	**Ethnic or cultural "others" are addressed**	"Islam is not part of Germany", "Gypsies don't belong here", "They are stealing our women"	0 1
danger12	**Political "others" (holding allegedly minority opinions) are addressed**	"The Greens are a danger for our future", "The President is selling our country"	0 1

Attachment 2: Categories for political topics used in the DigiWorld codebook:

B 6.4 Topics: Substantive policy issues [topic]

This category refers to the entire post, including the image(s)/videos (first minute after still images), the caption, geo tags, hashtags, and links.

Here it is coded whether the post addresses factual political issues and topics such as climate change, public health, pensions, education, etc. These topics can be addressed using text elements (text of the post, slogan, quote) as well as visual elements (photos, graphics). The aim of the post can be to draw attention to problems, to criticize the positions of political opponents, or to present their own positions and solutions for problems. If different topics are mentioned, all of them should be coded. For each category listed below, it has to be determined whether it is included in the post (1) or not (0).

IMPORTANT: Code as exactly as possible but as generally as necessary. This means: In case of doubt, the general categories (e.g., topic330) following after the detailed subcategories (e.g., topic331, topic332, topic333) are to be coded. At the same time, if a more specific code covers the topic of a post better, the more general code should NOT be coded in addition. For example, if a post only addresses criminality, the subcategory topic331 should be coded as present (=1) while the general category topic330 should NOT be coded as present (=0) in addition to also covering criminality. However, if the post addresses criminality (topic331) plus other aspects of domestic policy (topic330), both categories should be coded as present. Subcategories that can be subsumed under general categories are indicated by the bold strokes in the table below which include all related categories.

Category	Name: Description	Example	Code
topic100	**Polity:** Institutional and normative aspects of politics (structures, laws, institutions)	political order (constitution, democracy, federalism), electoral system, institutions (legislative, executive, judicial), social order, relationship between state and churches, political order (changes in the state model), constitution, legislative power, judiciary, territorial integrity	0 1
topic200	**Politics:** Processual aspects of politics	horse race coverage (polls, public opinion, election forecasts), legislative processes, Information on current or past poll numbers like popularity ratings for parties and top candidates, or public opinion polls	0 1
topic311	**Taxes**	e.g., levels of taxation and duties, both on salaries, properties, inheritance and	0 1

		goods such as sugar, alcohol and tobacco	
topic313	**Left-right economic issues**	e.g., public vs private ownership and control of healthcare, education, social services, industry and businesses (e.g., mentions of "privatisering", "velferdsprofitører", "valgfrihet", "friskoler" etc.), public bureaucracy, use of capital gains from the oil sector	0 1
topic315	**Rural policy**	e.g., transferring resources and public enterprises to rural areas ("distriktsnorge"), politicians' and bureaucrats' understanding of rural Norway, references to "distriktene", "distriktsnorge", "desentralisering", "sentralisering", e.g. in relation with "kommunesammenslåing" and "fylkessammenslåing"	0 1
topic316	**Agricultural policy**	e.g., agriculture subsidies, fishing industries, wood industry	0 1
topic310	**Economy and finance** ATTENTION: (un)employment is coded as topic324.	e.g., the European crisis, austerity measures, trade agreements, protectionism, customs duties, taxes, tax system, national debt, budget, budgetary policy, agriculture and forestry, enterprise policy, consumer protection	0 1
topic321	**Health**	health insurance, lack of personnel in the care sector, pandemic, the drug policy reform, dental health ATTENTION: COVID-19 related issues are coded under topic322.	0 1
topic322	**COVID-19 related issues**	e.g., pandemic crisis management, prioritizations of	0 1

topic371	**Education and research policy**	e.g., curriculum, school system, job training, universities, financial support for students, early childhood education, graduate and professional education, school size, class size, school/university choice, school/university privatization, tracking, teacher selection, teacher pay, teaching methods, curricular content, graduation requirements, school/university/research infrastructure, funding, and the values that schools and universities are expected to uphold and model	0 1
topic372	**Sport policy**	e.g., politics related to sport and leisure, state support for young athletes, state training programs, state-sponsored building of sports facilities, corona-related measures in sports stadiums	0 1
topic373	**Media policy and digitalization**	e.g., journalistic values, state of public broadcasting, bias in news reporting, nationwide WiFi, 5G standard, Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market (aka EU Copyright Directive)	0 1
topic370	**Cultural policy**	e.g., regulations for cultural events in times of the covid-pandemic; funding of theatres; public funding of movies	0 1
topic471	**Gender policy**	e.g., policies to combat gender violence (femicides, rapes, sexual abuse, mistreatment), equal pay, abortion, divorce	0 1
topic472	**LGBTQ+ policy**	e.g., policies to combat LGBTQ+ phobia and to promote equal rights (same-sex marriages, adoption of children, gender	0 1

		vaccinations, success of the vaccination campaign	
topic323	**Economic inequality**	e.g., mentions of "sosial utjevning", "sosial rettferdighet" or "omfordeling" in general or in relation to sickness and disability benefits, salary levels, progressive taxation of salaries, expanding upon public services instead of lowering taxes. Includes formulations such as «nå er det de fattiges tur", «de rikere bør ikke bli rikere», «forskjells-Norge», «forskjellene øker/har økt»	0 1
topic324	**Employment**	e.g., measures against unemployment, labor policy. Keywords: sykelønn, sykepenger, trygd, pensjon, dagpenger, sysselsetting, arbeidsledighet, NAV, stønad	0 1
topic325	**Policy for families and children**	e.g., childcare, youth policy, policies such as child-care allowance (including "barnetrygd" and "kontantstøtte"), parental allowance, protection against dismissal for expectant mothers, child-care places, tax incentives for parents	0 1
topic326	**Eldercare**	e.g., health and welfare services for the elderly	0 1
topic327	**Housing policy**	e.g., affordable housing, government interference in the housing market, measures to stimulate development of new residences	0 1
topic320	**Labor and social issues**	e.g., pensions, rents, wages, working hours, labor market, skilled workers, social policy, pension policy, welfare state	0 1

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		reassignment of transgender persons)	
topic470	**Civil rights**	e.g., measures to reduce inequalities within a country, children rights (e.g., violence against children and adolescents), minorities/indigenous rights (e.g., protection of the culture, language, rights or identity of minorities and indigenous people)	0 1
topic380	**Defense policy**	e.g., national security, military, external security, policy of peace, policy of détente	0 1
topic411	**Afghanistan**	e.g., civil war in Afghanistan, withdrawal of US army, flight of refugees from Afghanistan, reception of Afghan refugees in Norway	0 1
topic410	**War and military conflicts between countries**	e.g., UN peacekeeping, operations of the national army abroad	0 1
topic420	**EU/EEA**	e.g., mentions of EU, EEA membership, issues or opportunities within the EEA agreement	
topic460	**Developmental policy**	e.g., development aid	0 1
topic400	**Foreign policy, international relations** The post addresses foreign policy issues related or not related to the country under investigation.	e.g., relations between individual EU member states, relations with other states, relations with international organizations (e.g., UN, NATO), development policy, arms trades, sanctions, etc.	0 1
topic300	**Policy: Other topical aspects of politics/policy fields**: Only posts on political topics that	Only code if a post contains a topic which is not mentioned below or cannot be categorized in the above categories.	0 1

	cannot be assigned to any of the listed characteristics.		
topic998	**Other political topic**	e.g., posts containing political information/content which isn't mentioning or referring to any political topic	0 1
topic999	**Non-political topic**	e.g., posts containing non-political information/content, weather forecast, sports, literature critique about a book, etc.	0 1