

What makes the difference?

Social media platforms and party characteristics as contextual factors for political parties' use of populist political communication

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ABSTRACT

Social media has contributed to the spread of populist political communication, yet we still lack systematic knowledge of the contextual factors affecting its use. In this study, we investigated how and to what degree platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and party characteristics (populist vs. non-populist parties; political ideology) affected the use of populist communication by Norwegian political parties on social media during the 2021 national election campaign. Based on a tripartite conceptualisation of populist communication consisting of people-centrism, anti-elitism, and the exclusion of out-groups, we conducted a standardised content analysis of the official social media accounts of nine parties and their party leaders. Populist communication was overall rather rare, being most widespread on Facebook and least widespread on Twitter. Which parties used populist communication the most depended on the platform, and it was not always the populist Progress Party [Fremskrittspartiet] that communicated in the most populist manner. Parties located towards the fringes of the political party spectrum used more populist communication. Anti-elitism was more widespread among left-wing parties, and almost exclusively the right-wing Progress Party excluded out-groups.

KEYWORDS: election campaigning, Norway, populist political communication, content analysis, social media, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

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Introduction

In the wake of political upheavals, such as Brexit and Donald Trump's winning of the American presidential election in 2016, much research attention has been given to describing and explaining how and why populist political communication¹ gets so much traction (e.g., Reinemann et al., 2017; Zulianello et al., 2018). There is widespread agreement among researchers that populist communication has been fuelled by the simultaneous rise of social media (Maurer, 2022). The opportunity structures of social media provide political actors with excellent opportunities to reach out directly to their audiences, mobilise their voters, bypass the filter of the news media, and influence public opinion (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Hopster, 2021). All kinds of political actors make use of these opportunities (Ernst et al., 2019; Lilleker & Balaban, 2021), but populists are often particularly successful in doing so (Maurer, 2022). This presumed "elective affinity" (Gerbaudo, 2018: 745) between populists and social media contributes to populist communication spreading properly, quickly, and widely on social media (Maurer, 2022).

Populist communication is a vague term. In our study, we follow the well-established, communication-centred approach by Reinemann and colleagues (2017), which is based on Jagers and Walgrave's (2007) research and consists of three core elements: people-centrism, anti-elitism, and the exclusion of out-groups. Defined that way, populist communication is not bound to any political ideology and can be used by all kinds of political actors.

Even though a growing body of research has investigated the connection between populist communication and social media (for an overview, see Maurer, 2022), there is still a need for research into the contextual factors affecting how (much) populist communication is used (Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). Our study contributes to closing this research gap by investigating how nine Norwegian political parties and their party leaders used populist communication on their official social media accounts during the 2021 national election campaign. By means of a standardised content analysis, we systematically compare how certain contextual factors – social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and party characteristics (populist vs. non-populist parties; political ideology) – affected both the degree and the type of populist communication used.

Norway is an interesting case when it comes to the relationship between populist communication and social media. The country has had a populist party, the Progress Party [Fremskrittspartiet], since the early 1970s (Herkman & Kalsnes, 2023), and the party is known for its use of strong rhetoric to appeal to "ordinary people". However, since it was included in the government base of the non-socialist coalition from 2013–2021, its status as a populist party is to some extent debated (Jenssen, 2017; Jupskås, 2017). At the same time, and different from many other European countries, Norway has not witnessed significantly increasing electoral success of new populist parties (e.g., Alternative for Germany, Five Stars Movement in Italy), to which most probably also the long-term presence of a populist party – the Progress Party – contributed to. Moreover, the Internet provides fertile ground for spreading populist communication.

Virtually the entire Norwegian population has Internet access, and social media platforms are very popular: 73 per cent of the population uses Facebook, 48 per cent Instagram, and 15 per cent Twitter (now known as X) (Moe, 2022). If it turns out that populist communication is widespread even in Norway (which represents a rather conservative test), this might indicate that it is gaining a stronger foothold in moderate parties and in the midst of society.

Conceptual framework

Populist political communication

Political populism is a multifaceted, ambivalent phenomenon being discussed in various academic disciplines, such as political science, sociology, and communication studies. According to Bossetta and Husted (2017), it has been described as an ideology, a style, a movement, and a logic (for a detailed discussion on different analytical approaches to the study of populism, see also Moffitt, 2016). Populism is a normatively loaded concept. Some authors consider populism an existential threat to liberalism (though not to democracy, as such), since it challenges the political elites and the existing representative institutions (Mouffe, 2019; Müller, 2016). Other authors, in contrast, highlight the emancipatory, progressive aims of populism and see it as a corrective for democracy, and therefore an essential part of the democratic process and democratisation (Gerbaudo, 2018; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). What differentiates populism from anti-system and extremist movements is that it does not aim to abolish democracy but rather “challenges democracies from within the democratic system” (Ernst et al., 2017: 1348), which makes it less of an existential threat, particularly in stable democracies (de Vreese et al., 2018), such as Norway.

While we acknowledge the importance of these research traditions, our study builds on another, more recent tradition rooted in communication studies that focuses on populist communication as a communicative phenomenon. It takes a minimal, communication-centred approach when defining populist communication. According to this understanding (and different from many definitions of populism in political science), populist communication is not related to any one political ideology but can rather be combined with several, for example, right-wing (e.g., nationalism) and left-wing (e.g., socialism, communism) ideologies (Mudde, 2004).

Our study is theoretically grounded in a well-established framework developed by Reinemann and colleagues (2017), based on Jagers and Walgrave (2007), which places the spotlight on the content of political messages rather than differentiating between populist and non-populist political actors or ideologies. Their minimal definition (Mudde, 2004) allows us to bypass normative views of the phenomenon and empirically determine to which degree political actors use populist communication, independent of their ideology (de Vreese et al., 2018). Populist communication can be utilised by all actors across the party spectrum (Blassnig, 2021; Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017). Reinemann and colleagues (2017) defined three core elements that distinguish populist from non-populist communication: people-centrism, anti-elitism, and exclusion of out-groups.

People-centrism refers to people and is considered the most central, “minimal defining element” (de Vreese et al., 2018: 427) of populist communication (Reinemann et al., 2017). Mudde (2004: 546) called the people an “imagined community [which is] neither real nor all-inclusive, but [is] in fact a mythical and constructed sub-set of the whole population”. A common populist claim is to give the people a voice and return power to them as true sovereigns (Canovan, 1999; Gerbaudo, 2018). Populist communication creates the imagination of the people as a completely homogeneous group (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), but what exactly is meant by “the people” differs. The inherent vagueness of the term is part of the secret of success: Proponents of different views can find themselves in the same populist messages (Maurer, 2022), which makes populist communication an excellent strategy for reaching out to large audiences (Reinemann et al., 2017). Canovan (1999), for example, distinguished between three different kinds of people: “the united people”, who stand together against the power-holding bloc of the ruling, privileged elite; “the common people”, as opposed to the higher educated, aloof cultural elites who have lost contact with “the common people”; and “our people”, or the native people belonging to “our” nation. While the people, considered as the in-group, are opposed to another group, the nature or composition of this other group varies, too. Reinemann and colleagues’ (2017) conceptualisation allows for measuring people-centrism without any other group being explicitly mentioned, which Jagers and Walgrave (2007) referred to as “empty populism”. This is methodologically advantageous for measuring populist communication on social media, where its elements appear isolated from one another (Bene et al., 2023; Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017). In line with Canovan (1999), there are typically two kinds of other groups to which the people are opposed: either any elite (as opposed to “the united people” and “the common people”), or any out-group (as opposed to “our people”). These are addressed by the two other core elements of populist communication (Reinemann et al., 2017).

In anti-elitism, since “the elite” is assumed to oppose the will of the (however defined) people, populist communication attacks it. Hellström (2023) conceptualised the contrast between “the people” and “the elite” as the vertical dimension of what he calls “the populist divide”. As another vague term, the elite often gains its contours solely through juxtaposition with the people (Mudde, 2004; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). At the same time (and as a consequence thereof), there can be different kinds of elites, for example, the political elite (meaning mainly the mainstream parties in the respective country), the media elite (legacy media in contrast to alternative media and often social media), the economic elite, the moral elite, and the cultural elite (Hellström, 2023). Depending on the political ideology populist communication is related to, the conflict between the people and the elite will centre on different matters, and different elites will be attacked. Left-wing populism tends to attack economic elites, while right-wing populism tends to attack the political, media, or scientific elite (Maurer, 2022).

With exclusion of out-groups, while the elite is located “above” the people in the social hierarchy, the other assumed opponent is located “beside” or even “below” the people: The so-called dangerous others (one or several out-groups) must

be excluded since they are considered a threat to the people (Engesser, Fawzi, & Larsson, 2017). Hellström (2023: 5) conceptualised the “articulated differences between ‘the people’, who ‘naturally’ belong here, and ‘the non-people’ (the Other), who do not” as the horizontal dimension of the populist divide (which he, however, called people-centrism). The “othering”, based on social identity and social comparisons (Reinemann et al., 2017), sharpens the contours of the people as the in-group. The “others” are considered a homogeneous group that is “unjustly favored by the elite or even their partner in a conspiracy against the people” (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017: 1112). Depending on the political ideology with which populist communication is combined, different groups are perceived as “others”, such as immigrants and ethnic, sexual, or religious minorities (Reinemann et al., 2017; see also Hellström, 2023). According to Rovira Kaltwasser (2012), this exclusionary element of populism is more typical in Europe (the same seems to apply to the US; Hopster, 2021), while populism in Latin America aims more strongly at including underprivileged groups.

These three core elements can appear both separately and in various combinations in political communication (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). This approach makes it possible not only to differentiate between populist and non-populist communication but also between the *degree* of populist communication and between different *types* of populist communication, thus allowing for a differentiated measurement thereof (de Vreese et al., 2018).

Reinemann and colleagues’ (2017) approach is not without alternatives. For example, Engesser, Ernst, Esser, and Büchel (2017) conceptualised populist communication as an emphasis on the sovereignty of the people, advocacy for the people, attacks against the elites, ostracising others, and invoking the heartland. However, these dimensions are, upon closer inspection – even though they are further differentiated – very similar to the three core elements put forth by Reinemann and colleagues (2017). Ernst and colleagues (2017, 2019) conceptualised populist communication as consisting of three populist key messages (where they also use people-centrism and anti-elitism but replace exclusion of out-groups with restoring sovereignty) combined with three populist communication styles (negativity, emotionality, and sociability). However, it has been empirically shown that the exclusion of out-groups relates more strongly to right-wing populism, while anti-elitism is more closely related to left-wing populism (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). Therefore, we consider the exclusion of out-groups necessary to include, since it allows for a more balanced measurement of populist communication.

Relationship between populist communication and social media

There is widespread agreement in the literature that populist communication and social media are closely related. Social media do not *cause* populism, but they foster the spread of populist communication (Maurer, 2022) due to the specific opportunity structures they provide (Engesser, Fawzi, & Larsson, 2017; similarly described as affordances by Hopster, 2021). Particularly three opportunity structures

make using populist communication on social media strategically advantageous for political actors: direct communication, attention economy, and user metrics.

First, the technological infrastructure of social media allows direct communication between political actors and citizens which resonates with people-centrism (Engesser, Fawzi, & Larsson, 2017) and facilitates populist communication. Being able to spread their messages and bypass the media's critical editorial filters can be favourable for all political actors. However, it is particularly favourable for populists, whose positions are often attacked by the news media (but are well suited to be distributed by means of populist communication) and whose supporters might be sceptical toward, and therefore difficult to reach via, the news media (Hopster, 2021).

Second, some authors relate populist communication to stylistic characteristics, such as negativity, emotionality, simplifying language (Ernst et al., 2019; Jacobs et al., 2020; Sandberg et al., 2022), and sensationalism (Hopster, 2021) – in other words, an attention economy. The popularity bias of social media algorithms favours content with such features that catch the attention of many users and generate user engagement (e.g., clicks, likes, emotional reactions, shares, comments). These patterns result in higher visibility and virality of populist compared with non-populist political content, which in turn creates even more attention for populist communication. This applies all the more, as content that is successful on social media is often reported in the news media, which increases its reach beyond the platforms.

Lastly, from the importance of user engagement on social media follows their ability to (allegedly) serve as the people's voice, their rally (Gerbaudo, 2018), and an expression of the "general will" (Hopster, 2021), which relates to people-centrism. Even though user metrics on social media are by no means representative of the entire population (Magin, 2022), they are useful for campaign planning, since they are generated in real time and provide an incidence of which issues people currently care about (Hopster, 2021).

Contextual factors of populist political communication

While these opportunity structures foster the spread of populist communication on social media in general, research shows that how well social media and populist communication interact depends on contextual factors. However, research into these contextual factors is still in its early stages (Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). To shed light thereon, we investigated how the platforms used (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and two party characteristics (populist vs. non-populist parties; party ideology) affected the use of populist communication. All three factors have been discussed in the literature but without any definite answers yet.

Concerning platforms, it is widely assumed (Hopster, 2021), and proven by empirical research (Blassnig, 2021; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020), that the different opportunity structures of various social media platforms fuel the use of populist communication differently. Ernst and colleagues (2017) and Schmuck and Hameleers (2020) have shown that populist communication has been more widespread on Facebook than on Twitter. Furthermore, Jacobs and colleagues

(2020: 628) found that politicians used populist communication differently on these two platforms, leading to the conclusion that “it is indeed important not to lump different platforms together under the header ‘social media’: the differences in user base and architecture matter empirically”. These findings show the importance of systematic cross-platform comparisons (Schwartz et al., 2022), also because not all parties use all platforms. However, so far, many studies have investigated only one platform – mainly Facebook (Bene et al., 2023; Kalsnes, 2019; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018; Sandberg et al., 2022; Zulianello et al., 2018) and, more rarely, Twitter (Bracciale & Martella, 2017; Maurer & Diehl, 2020; Waisbord & Amado, 2017). Although Instagram has become a central platform in election campaigns and provides opportunity structures that distinguish it significantly from other platforms (Larsson, 2021), content analyses on populist communication there are so far rare and focus mainly exclusively on visual representations of populism (Bast, 2021; Moffitt, 2022). A few studies have compared populist communication on Facebook and Twitter (Bracciale et al., 2021; Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Ernst et al., 2017, 2019; Jacobs et al., 2020), but comparisons across more platforms are missing. An exception is Baldwin-Philippi (2019), who qualitatively investigated the use of people-centrism on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram but neglected other dimensions of populist communication. This deficient state of cross-platform comparisons leads to our first research question:

RQ1. How widespread was populist communication in political parties’ posts on their official Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts during the 2021 Norwegian election campaign?

Moreover, we investigated how two party characteristics affected the use of populist communication: populist versus non-populist parties; and party ideology. Research on the connection between populist communication and social media has so far strongly focused on so-called populist actors (Järvinemi, 2022; for examples, see Kalsnes, 2019; Sandberg et al., 2022; Waisbord & Amado, 2017) for whom social media seem to provide a particularly favourable communication space (Gerbaudo, 2018; Hopster, 2021). However, this research direction implicitly presupposes that populist actors make particular use of populist communication – which is not necessarily the case (Järvinemi, 2022; Lilleker & Balaban, 2021). Populist communication on social media can be an important strategic tool (Kalsnes, 2019) across the party spectrum (Bene et al., 2023), particularly in election campaigns when parties are forced to reach out to the electorate. Recently, the number of content analyses comparing the use of populist communication by populist and non-populist actors has been growing, but they have revealed ambiguous results. Some studies find that populist actors use a higher degree of populist communication (Ernst et al., 2019; Gründl, 2022; Järvinemi, 2022; Zulianello et al., 2018), while others show that being populist or not does not alone decide if and how much populist communication an actor uses (Bene et al., 2023; Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Lilleker & Balaban, 2021). From this unclear picture, we derive the following research question:

RQ2. How much did the degree of populist communication differ between populist and non-populist political parties?

When it comes to party ideology, we are interested in how it affects 1) the degree and 2) the type of populist communication. Concerning the degree of populist communication, content analyses have consistently and across different countries shown that political actors with an ideology located more toward the fringes of the political-party spectrum use a higher degree of populist communication compared with more moderate actors (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Ernst et al., 2017; Lilleker & Balaban, 2021; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). This leads to our first hypothesis:

H1. Parties closer to the fringes of the political-party spectrum used a higher degree of populist communication on their official social media accounts.

When turning to the type of populist communication, we looked at how much the three core elements of populist communication (Reinemann et al., 2017) were used. In a comparative content analysis of four countries, Engesser, Ernst, Esser, and Büchel (2017) showed that populist communication often appeared in a fragmented form on social media; that is, its elements appeared isolated from one another. Moreover, the frequency with which the elements in total are used differs (Lilleker & Balaban, 2021; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). However, parties with different political ideologies have been shown to use the elements of populist communication differently (Maurer, 2022; Reinemann et al., 2017): Anti-elitism has an affinity with left-wing populism, often attacking economic elites, while the exclusion of out-groups tends to be used by right-wing populism, often attacking minorities (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). Therefore, we hypothesise:

H2. Depending on their political ideology, political parties used different types of populism on their official social media accounts.

Norway as a case for studying populist communication

We investigated our research questions and tested our hypotheses using the example of Norway. Over the past decades, Norwegian politics has been characterised by coalition governments that seek broad compromises and consensus within and across the two major blocs: the social-democratic/socialist (red) party bloc and the non-socialist (blue) party bloc. This party classification into two blocs does not quite correspond to the widely used left–right classification of political parties. Historically being a party system built on cross-cutting cleavages (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967), the degree of societal and political polarisation in Norway has remained low (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2021). Nevertheless, the number of parties represented in the national parliament [Stortinget] has steadily increased, and ten parties and lists returned members of parliament after the 2021 national election (see Table 1), which resulted in a change of power from a non-socialist coalition

government headed by the Conservative Party [Høyre] to a Red/Green coalition government led by the Labour Party [Arbeiderpartiet]. The parties that can be considered politically closest to the fringes of the two blocs are the Red Party [Rødt] and Socialist Left Party [Sosialistisk venstreparti] (to the left), as well as the Progress Party (to the right). However, the degree of polarisation in the Norwegian party system is low overall, and even these parties would probably not be considered fringe or extreme in other countries. It is important to note that none of these parties can be classified as radical or extremist.

Furthermore, the Progress Party is the only Norwegian party that has consistently and over time been categorised as populist (Herkman & Jungar, 2021; Herkman & Kalsnes, 2023). It was founded as an anti-tax party by Anders Lange in 1973, then called the “Anders Lange’s Party”, but renamed the “Fremskrittspartiet” (in English: “the Progress Party”) in 1977, following the example of the successful Danish Progress Party. The Progress Party’s strong stance on anti-immigration from the 1980s onwards continuously attracted voters in the following elections. However, after its inclusion in the so-called Blue–Blue coalition government in 2013–2021, and thereby a normalisation into the right-wing movement (Herkman & Jungar, 2021), the categorisation of the party as being populist or not has been discussed (Jenssen, 2017; Jupskås, 2017). The Progress Party was the third-largest party in the Norwegian parliament in 2017–2021. In 2020, it left the government after controversies with its coalition partners on the issue of returning a Norwegian citizen and her children from Syria, thereby reviving its anti-immigration rhetoric. In international comparisons, the Progress Party is still considered right-wing populist, and, according to PopuList, it is the only populist party right now in Norway (Rooduijn et al., 2019). The few analyses of the party’s social media communication show only moderate evidence of populist communication (Kalsnes, 2019).

TABLE 1 Norwegian parties represented in parliament, 2021

Party	Votes (%)	Man- dates (change)	In gov't before elec- tion	Ideological position/bloc	Social media platforms used in the campaign	Party leader	Catego- rised as populist (accord- ing to Popu- List)
Labour Party [Arbeiderpar- tiet]	26.3	48 (-1)	No	Social Democratic/ Red-Green	All	Jonas Gahr Støre	No
Conservative Party [Høyre]	20.4	36 (-9)	Yes	Conservative- Liberal/Blue	All (Twitter only by party leader)	Erna Solberg	No
Centre Party [Senterpar- tiet]	13.5	28 (+9)	No	Rural/ Red-Green	Facebook and Instagram (Instagram only by party)	Trygve Slagsvold Vedum	No
Progress Par- ty [Freskritt- partiet]	11.6	21 (-6)	No	Populist, Rightwing/ Blue	Facebook and Instagram	Sylvi Listhaug	Yes
Socialist Left Party [Sosial- istisk venstre- parti]	7.6	13 (+2)	No	Socialist/ Red	All	Audun Lysbak- ken	No
Red Party [Rødt]	4.7	8 (+7)	No	Socialist/ Red	All	Bjørnar Moxnes	No
Liberal Party [Venstre]	4.6	8 (0)	No	Non-Socialist/ Liberal/Blue	All	Guri Melby	No
Christian People's Party [Kristelig Folkeparti]	3.8	3 (-5)	Yes	Non-Socialist/ Christian/ Blue	Facebook and Instagram	Kjell Ingolf Ropstad	No
Green Party [Miljøpartiet de Grønne]	3.9	3 (+2)	No	Green	All	Une Bast- holm	No
Patient Focus [Pasientfokus]	0.2	1 (+1)	No	One issue movement, regional	Facebook (only used by party)	Irene Ojala	Not categorised

Source: Valgdirektoratet, 2021; Rooduijn et al., 2019

Methods

Sample and data collection

To test our hypotheses and answer our research questions, we conducted a standardised content analysis of posts published on the official Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts of the nine established parties that were elected to the Norwegian national parliament in 2021, as well as the official accounts of their party leaders. In total, we collected 2,599 posts from the four weeks prior to election day (17 August–13 September 2021). The post content and metadata were collected using the CrowdTangle API.³ for Facebook and Instagram and the Twitter API for Academic Research for Twitter. At the time of coding, five posts had already been deleted: therefore, we could code the content of 2,594 posts. We decided to exclude the 76 Facebook posts from the Patient Focus [Pasientfokus] movement since it is not registered as a party, and they had no accounts on Instagram or Twitter. This left us with 2,518 posts (Facebook: 1,030; Instagram: 576; Twitter: 912). Table A1 in the Appendix provides an overview of the sample. Although Norwegian election campaigns may be personalised in the sense that the party leaders represent the parties in images and social media posts (Enli & Skogerbø, 2013), the election system is party-centred, and the campaigns of parties and party leaders are jointly planned and organised (Skogerbø & Karlsen, 2014). Therefore, we lump together the accounts of parties and party leaders and treat both as campaign materials for the parties.

This study builds on the international comparative project “Digital Election Campaigning Worldwide” (DigiWorld),² which investigates various aspects of social media campaigning in more than 30 countries by means of standardised content analysis using a joint English codebook. Due to reasons of practicability, our coding included the entire text of each post as well as the first image or (first minute of the) first video included in it. While other studies in this field employ automated methods (Gründl, 2022; Sandberg et al., 2022), we decided to code the materials manually, which entails one decisive advantage: Procedures such as topic modelling and natural language processing are based only on text and are not able to analyse the information contained in visual materials such as pictures and videos. However, these visual components are central to fully understanding the meaning of posts, particularly because they often contain content (e.g., issues, positions, arguments) not covered by the text. Visuals are important for catching user attention and are favoured by social media algorithms, which makes posts even more widespread. This centrality is reflected by the fact that only 2 per cent of all posts in our sample did not include visuals.

Measurement

To measure populist communication, we coded the three core elements suggested by Reinemann and colleagues (2017) – people-centrism, anti-elitism, and the exclusion of out-groups – by means of seven categories, all of which were

coded binary as present (1) or not present (0), independent from one another. Complete category descriptions can be found in the Appendix.

People-centrism comprised references to the “pure people” (c1) and was coded when a national community or the unity of people were addressed in a post. Indicators such as “(will of the) people”, “our nation”, and “the citizens” were coded as means to generate a sense of community in some way. For coding people-centrism, however, it was not enough that those terms were mentioned. Rather, the post had to create a contrast between “the entire people” (for which the party/actor stood) and “the elite/the others”.

Anti-elitism captured whether a post blamed any elite (e.g., political elite, bureaucrats, economic elites, the news media, supranational elites) (c2.1), questioned the elite’s legitimacy to make decisions (c2.2), called for resistance against the elite (c2.3), or accused the elite of betraying the people (c2.4).

Exclusion of out-groups comprised posts calling for the exclusion of ethnic or cultural “others” (c3.1) and political “others” (c3.2).

To measure the degree of populist communication contained in the posts, we computed sub-indices for anti-elitism [$ae = (c2.1 + c2.2 + c2.3 + c2.4) / 4$] and exclusion of out-groups [$eo = (c3.1 + c3.2) / 2$]. People-centrism [$pc = c1$] which consisted of only one variable, was kept. These three sub-indices were combined into an overarching additive populist communication index [$pi = (pc + ae + eo) / 3$]. All sub-indices and the overall index were standardised to a value ranging from 0 (no populist communication at all; no category coded as present) to 1 (highest degree of populist communication; all seven categories coded as present).

Reliability

All posts were coded by three student coders who underwent intensive training in the joint English codebook. We tested intercoder reliability based on 140 randomly selected posts (5.6% of the full sample) using Brennan and Prediger’s kappa, which is chance-corrected and more robust than Krippendorff’s alpha regarding variables with a skewed distribution (Quarfoot & Levine, 2016). In addition, we report the “raw” agreement levels (% agreement). Reliability was sufficient for all categories (see Table A2 in the Appendix).

Analyses

We base our analyses on the sub-indices for the three elements of populist communication to investigate the *type* of populist communication, as well as the overall index that allows us to determine the *degree* of populist communication used in the posts. Analyses were performed using a series of statistical techniques. Given the skewed nature of the indices used, we opted for non-parametric analysis methods.

Findings

Platform characteristics (RQ1)

To answer the first research question on the degree of populist communication used on the three platforms, we investigated how strongly the three elements of populist communication were used across the three platforms (see Table 2). Overall, the Norwegian political parties were rather restrained from using populist communication: Only 8.5 per cent of all posts contained any form of populist communication (not shown in Table 2). Anti-elitism emerged as the comparatively most common element. Comparing the three platforms across the three dimensions, Facebook emerged as the most populist platform. Reading each row in Table 2 from left to right, the percentages decrease as we move from Facebook to Twitter via Instagram. Thus, while the presence of populist communication is limited across all three platforms, we nevertheless see some discrepancies between them, which might be related to the platforms' opportunity structures. Longer posts provide more space, possibly also to use a higher degree of populist communication. Typically, posts on Facebook are more text-heavy than both those on the visual-dominated platform Instagram and on the micro-blogging service Twitter, which limits tweets to a maximum of 280 characters. An additional analysis of the relationship between post length and the overarching additive index using Spearman's rho suggests a significant correlation of .13 ($p < .001$) – not very strong, but still indicative that longer posts tend to include a higher degree of populist communication.

TABLE 2 Presence of populist communication across platforms (per cent)

	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
People-centrism	3.1	1.9	0.2
Anti-elitism	9.3	6.8	4.3
Exclusion of out-groups	2.9	1.4	0.4

Comments: $n = 2,518$ posts.

Party characteristics (RQ2, H1, H2)

In order to answer our second research question, we investigated how party characteristics affected the use of populist communication, starting with the comparison between populist (i.e., the Progress Party, the only populist party in our sample) versus non-populist (i.e., the remaining) parties. For Facebook, the mean overall index for the Progress Party (M: 0.048, Sd: 0.118) was higher than the combined mean of all other parties (M: 0.022, Sd: 0.078). A Wilcoxon rank-sum test indicated that this difference was statistically significant ($p = 0.024$). For Instagram, the mean reported for the Progress Party emerged as lower (M: 0.006, Sd: 0.038) than the mean for all other actors combined

(M: 0.016, Sd: 0.066), but according to a Wilcoxon rank-sum test for these means ($p = 0.137$), this difference is not statistically significant. On Twitter, the Progress Party was not active during the study period.

The first hypothesis postulates that a party ideology toward the fringes of the political-party spectrum leads to a higher degree of populist communication. Figure 1 details the mean of our additive index for each studied party on each platform, which allows us to compare the degrees of populist communication across platforms and parties. The error bars indicate the standard deviations of said index for each party on each platform.

Starting with Facebook (represented by purple bars in Figure 1), a Kruskal-Wallis H test suggested significant differences among the reported means. Post hoc testing using Dunn's test revealed the highest mean reported – for the Progress Party (M: 0.048, Sd: 0.119) – to be significantly different ($p < .005$) from the lowest means reported – for the Christian People's Party [Kristelig Folkpartie] (M: 0.003, Sd: 0.016) and the Liberal Party [Venstre] (M: 0.004, Sd: 0.025). The Labour Party (M: 0.035, Sd: 0.107) emerged as similarly significantly different ($p < .005$) from the Christian People's and Liberal Parties. Thus, while the differences between them were not statistically significant, the top populist parties, according to their communication on Facebook, were the Progress Party and the Labour Party, followed by the Red Party (M: 0.036, Sd: 0.092) and the Socialist Left Party (M: 0.032, Sd: 0.093).

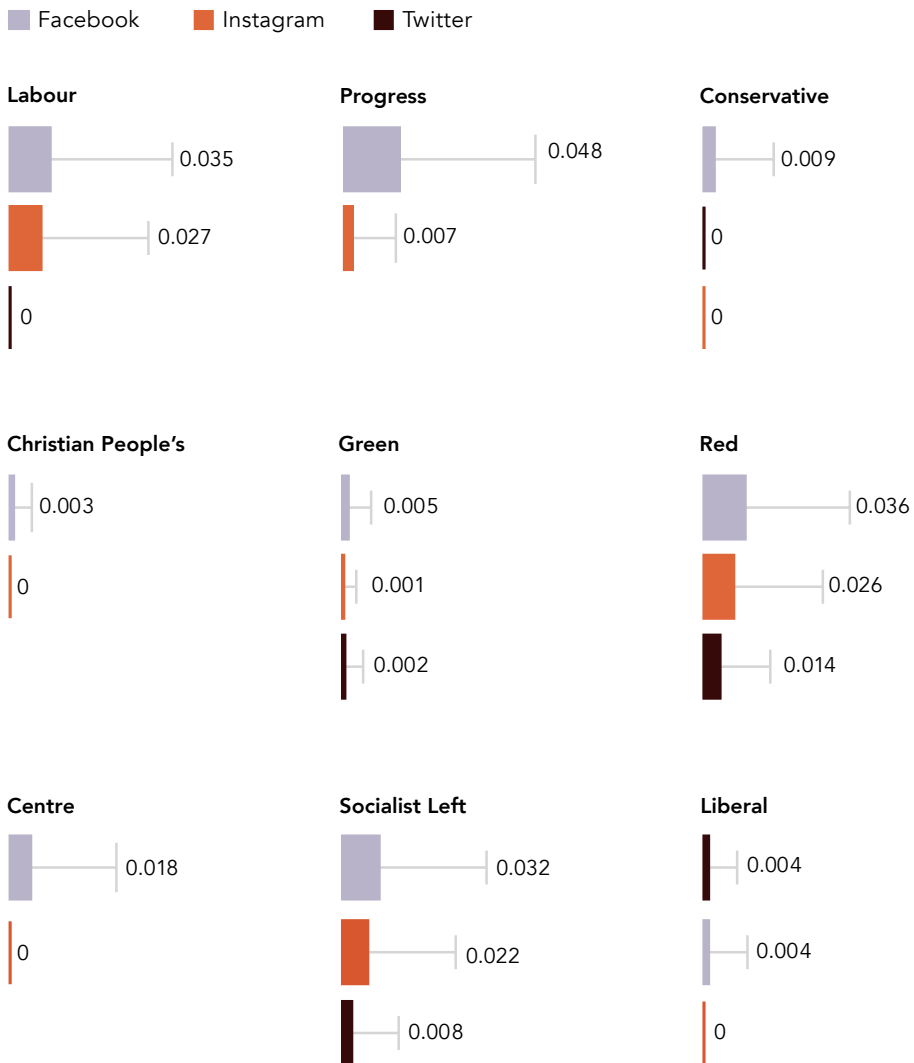
Second, for Instagram (indicated by orange bars in Figure 1), the relative scarcity compared with the Facebook posts suggests that Instagram was not prioritised when it comes to the use of populist communication, as defined here. Indeed, while all parties made use of populist communication on Facebook, the results suggest that four parties – Conservative, Christian People's, Centre, and Liberal – did not engage on Instagram in this way at all. Among the parties that did engage, the Labour (M: 0.027, Sd: 0.094), Red (M: 0.026, Sd: 0.078), and Socialist Left (M: 0.022, Sd: 0.077) Parties were more populist with regard to our additive populist communication index. Interestingly, while the Progress Party emerged with the highest mean index value for Facebook, the mean reported for their Instagram account (M: 0.007, Sd: 0.038) suggests different content strategies for different platforms. However, a Kruskal-Wallis H test found no significant differences among the means reported for Instagram ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that while we can discern some tendencies regarding usage, we should be careful not to overstate them.

Finally, even fewer parties – namely only four – spread populist communication on Twitter: Red (M: 0.014, Sd: 0.044), Socialist Left (M: 0.007, Sd: 0.036), Liberal (M: 0.004, Sd: 0.025), and Green (M: 0.002, Sd: 0.016). A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated significant differences among the means ($p < .001$). Post-hoc testing using Dunn's test showed as only significant differences a higher mean for the Red Party than for the Liberal ($p < .005$) and Green ($p < .005$) Parties.

To sum up, we can classify the Progress, Red, Labour, and Socialist Left Parties as those using the most populist communication, with the described differences across platforms: the Progress Party is most populist on Facebook (albeit not significantly so, as discussed above); the Labour, Red, and Socialist Left Parties

are on top for Instagram (statistically indistinguishable from each other); and the Red and Socialist Left Parties rank highest on Twitter. Compared to the right-wing Progress Party, the left-wing Labour, Socialist Left, and Red Parties employed populist communication more consistently across all three platforms. Thus, in line with the first hypothesis, we see a clear differentiation of the parties that we have categorised as being more towards the fringes of the Norwegian political-party spectrum (Progress, Socialist Left, Red) across platforms – with the Labour Party as the odd one out.

FIGURE 1 Additive populist communication index across platforms, by party (mean)

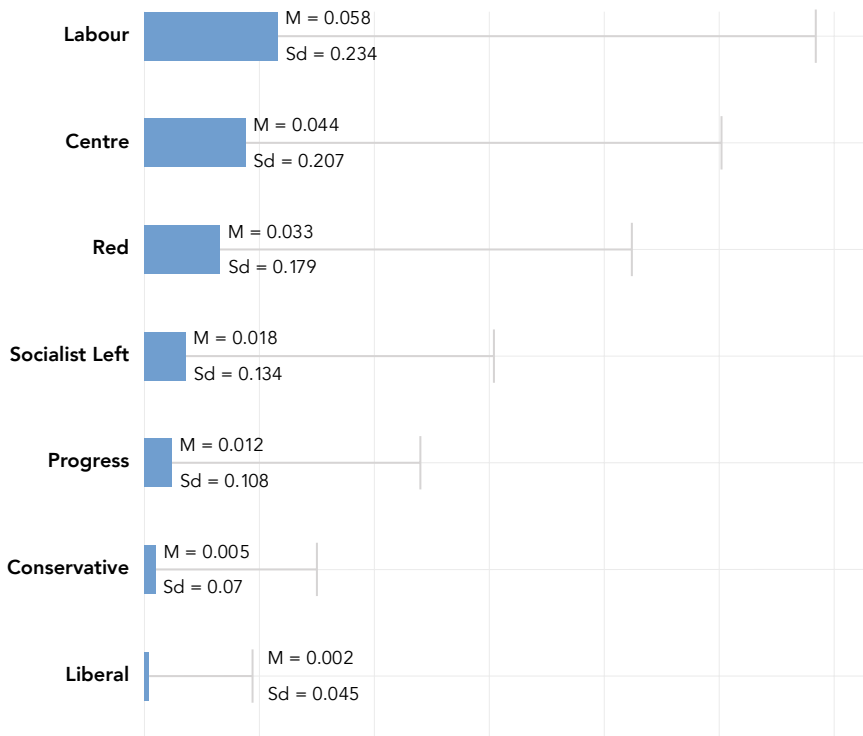


Comments: $n = 2,518$ posts.

Finally, we tested the second hypothesis, which postulates that parties will use different types of populist communication depending on their ideologies. We investigated the means and standard deviations for our sub-indices of people-centrism (see Figure 2), anti-elitism (see Figure 3), and exclusion of out-groups (see Figure 4) for all parties. To avoid too few cases, we lump the platforms together here.

Figure 2 suggests that the Labour Party (M: 0.058, Sd: 0.234) made the most frequent use of people-centrism, with their future coalition partner the Centre Party (M: 0.044, Sd: 0.207) in second place. A Kruskal–Wallis H test indicated significant differences between the means. A post hoc test using Dunn’s test revealed that the means reported for the Labour and Centre Parties were not significantly different from each other ($p > .005$). However, the mean for the Labour Party emerged as significantly higher when compared with all other means ($p < .005$ for all such comparisons). The mean reported for the Centre Party, however, was not significantly higher than any other mean ($p > .005$ for all such comparisons). Thus, during our study period, the Labour and Centre Parties used references to the people most often in the posts on their official social media accounts.

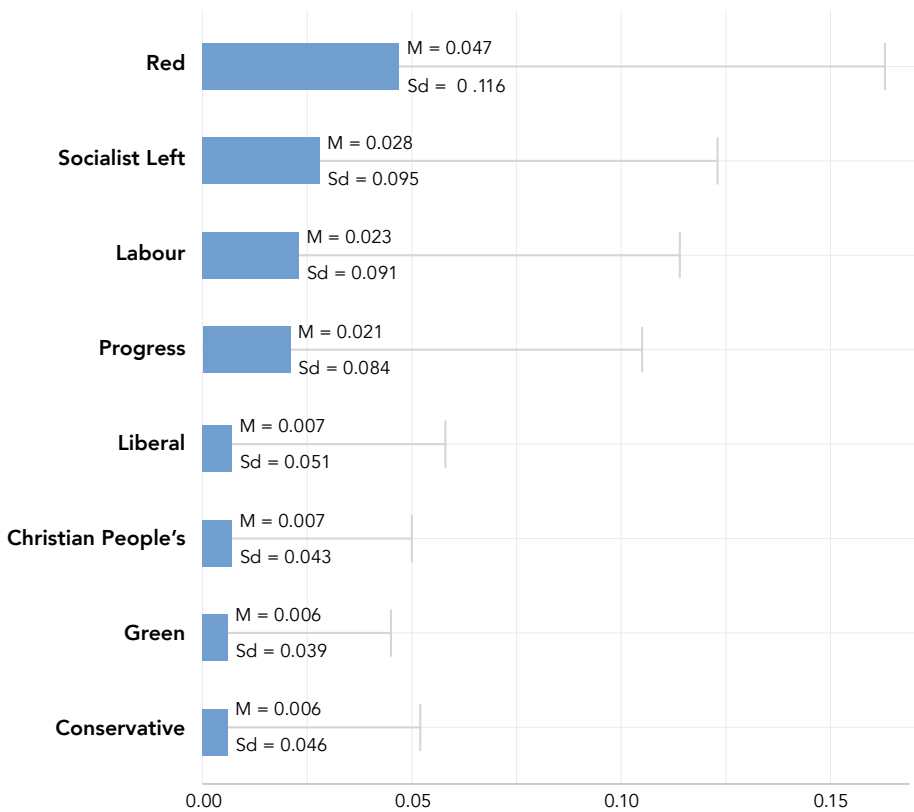
FIGURE 2 Use of people-centrism per post for all platforms, by party (mean and standard deviation)



Comments: $n = 2,518$ posts.

A different picture emerges when we assess the means of our anti-elitism index (see Figure 3). This shows that the three socialist parties emerged at the top in this regard. The far-left Red Party (M: 0.047, Sd: 0.116) used anti-elitism to a higher degree than the left-wing Socialist Left Party (M: 0.028, Sd: 0.095) and the social-democratic Labour Party (M: 0.023, Sd: 0.091). A Kruskal-Wallis H test for differences between the means reported in Figure 4 proved significant differences ($p < .001$). A post hoc test using Dunn's test revealed that the mean for the Red Party was significantly different from all other means ($p < .001$). The mean reported for the Socialist Left Party emerged as higher than those reported for the Liberal, Christian People's, Green, or Conservative Parties ($p < .005$ for all means) but failed to reach statistical significance when compared with the means found for the Labour and Progress Parties. In sum, while parties belonging to the red bloc prevailed with regard to anti-elitism, not all the means reported for these parties were found to be significantly different from each other.

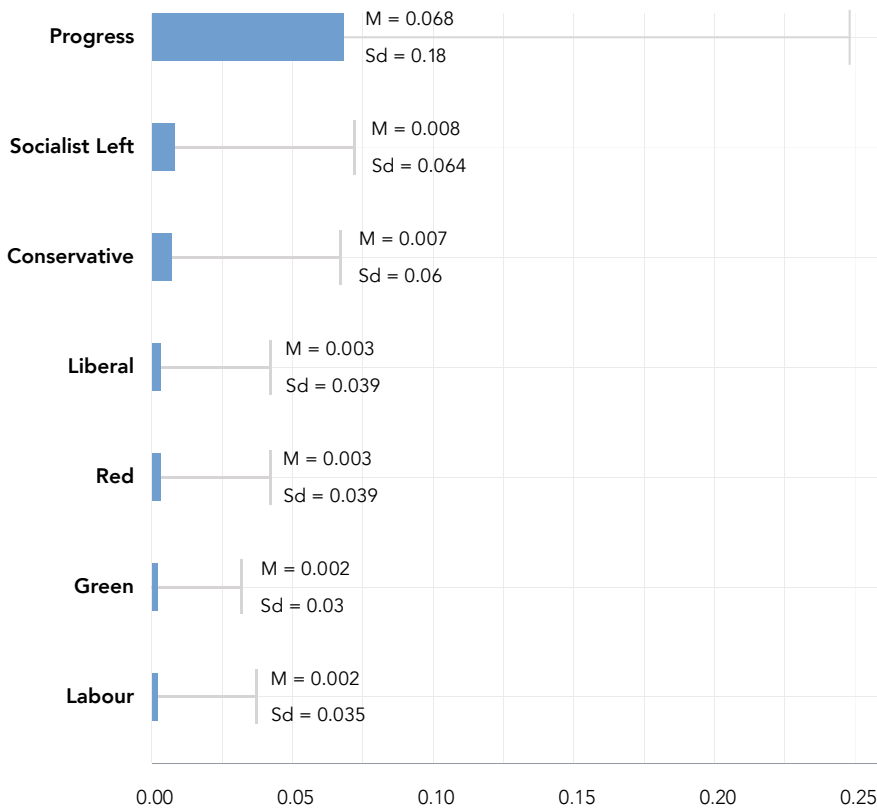
FIGURE 3 Use of anti-elitism per post for all platforms, by party (mean and standard deviation)



Comments: $n = 2,518$ posts.

While more parties employed people-centrism and anti-elitism, Figure 4 reveals a very different picture of the exclusion of out-groups. This element was used almost only by the right-wing populist Progress Party (M: 0.068, Sd: 0.18). A Kruskal-Wallis H test ($p < .001$) in combination with a subsequent Dunn's test showed that the mean for the Progress Party was significantly different from all other means ($p < .001$ for all means). No other significant differences emerged from this analysis ($p > .005$ for all comparisons).

FIGURE 4 Use of exclusion of out-groups per post for all platforms, by party (mean and standard deviation)



Comments: $n = 2,518$ posts.

Concluding discussion

In this study, we have compared the use of populist political communication by Norwegian political parties during the 2021 national election campaign on their official accounts on three social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. When comparing platforms (RQ1), we see that populist communication is overall rather rare, similar to what Järvinemi (2022) found for the neighbouring country Finland. Populist communication is, however, more common on Facebook than on Instagram and least widespread on Twitter. The difference between Facebook and Twitter is in line with previous research (Ernst et al., 2017; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020), which neglected Instagram. One possible explanation for these differences is the platforms' opportunity structures: The text-heaviness of Facebook provides the opportunity for more use of populist communication (as our additional analyses show) compared with the visually dominated platform Instagram and the less text-heavy (due to the maximum number of 280 signs per tweet) Twitter. However, user groups may also play a role. While 73 per cent of the Norwegian population uses Facebook, 48 per cent use Instagram, but only 15 per cent Twitter (Moe, 2022). Thus, "ordinary citizens" as a main target group of populist communication are much easier to reach on Facebook and Instagram, all the more as one of Twitters' main user groups have been journalists (Magin & Maurer, 2019) towards whom – as another elite – the use of populist communication may seem less useful (Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). It remains to be explored in future studies how the current turmoil surrounding Twitter (now X) will affect its use as a channel for campaigning and populist communication.

Concerning party characteristics, we find that the Progress Party, the only populist party in our sample, does not use the highest degree of populist communication in all respects (RQ2). It used the most populist communication on Facebook and referred the most to exclusion of out-groups, but on Instagram and with regard to the other elements of populism, the non-populist parties used a higher degree of populist communication. On Twitter, the Progress Party was not even present. Our findings are thus more in line with studies according to which parties labelled as populist do not necessarily use more populist communication (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Lilleker & Balaban, 2021). The question arises about how far our finding relates to the Progress Party's status as a populist party, which has recently been discussed (Jenssen, 2017; Jupskås, 2017). Following Reinemann and colleagues (2017; see also de Vreese et al., 2018), political actors should be defined as populists based on the degree to which they use populist communication. Defined this way, political actors' communication can be located on a continuum from non-populist to completely populist communication. Even though we agree with this conceptualisation in general, the example of the Progress Party shows its boundaries: How much populist communication must an actor use to be called a populist? Should the Progress Party be called a populist party because it uses a relatively high degree of populist communication – or should it not be called populist (anymore) be-

cause it is not the most populist party in all respects? And, following the latter logic, which other Norwegian political parties could be called populist then?

Maybe it is context-dependent where we draw the line between actors being called populist or non-populist. Norway is a consensus-oriented, little-polarised, multiparty system in which populist communication can be expected to be less widespread (Järviemi, 2022). This is supported by the striking results showing how little all parties used populist communication. It is conceivable that the population in countries such as Norway accept lower degrees of populist communication than in more polarised, less consensus-oriented majority systems. Instead of discussing further the pros and cons of the minimal approach to populist communication, our study, somewhat unfortunately, raises the question of the productivity of the concept as such: Do our findings simply indicate that parties with different leanings strategically use social media differently across various platforms? These are theoretical questions that need to be discussed in the future.

Finally, our findings show that the party ideology clearly affects the degree and type of populist communication used. Supporting our first hypothesis and in line with previous research (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Ernst et al., 2017; Lilleker & Balaban, 2021; Mazzoleni & Bracciale, 2018), parties located towards the fringes of the political-party spectrum used a higher degree of populist communication. However, an interesting exception is the social-democratic Labour Party, whose campaign was relatively populist. The Labour Party was leading in the polls, according to which it had a good chance of moving from opposition to government; maybe the party applied populist communication to reach out to even more voters with their campaign in order to further ensure their electoral victory. This points to the effect of situational factors on the use of populist communication (Blassnig, 2021), which needs to be taken systematically into account in future research. Moreover, supporting our second hypothesis and confirming previous studies (Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020), we find that it was particularly left-wing parties who played out anti-elitism, while exclusion of out-groups was almost only used by the right-wing Progress Party. This finding might also help explain why anti-elitism was the most prevalent element of populist communication compared with people-centrism and exclusion of out-groups: several left-wing parties – particularly Red and Socialist Left, but also Labour – were quite active on social media (taken together, much more active than the Progress Party), and all of them used a relatively high degree of populist communication.

The main contribution of our study is to shed more light on the near-neglected question how contextual factors systematically affect the use of populist communication on social media (Schmuck & Hameleers, 2020). However, the factors we investigated – platforms, populist versus non-populist parties, and party ideology – are most probably only three of a complex mix of contextual factors which need to be further investigated. These can be related both to the posts (micro-level, e.g., their length, as shown by our analyses, or the topic; Bene et al., 2023), to the parties (meso-level, e.g., their size or their government vs. opposition status), and to the country (macro-level). If one were to place not only political actors but also countries on a continuum from non-populist to very

populist based on the use of populist communication, Norway would probably be located near the non-populist pole, according to our results. Most likely, Norway's characteristics described above contribute significantly to this, but here, a pivotal limitation of our study becomes apparent: We investigated only one country for a relatively short period of time. To get to the bottom of this, more cross-country comparative research is needed. Some authors have already made first valuable contributions in this direction (Bene et al., 2023; Engesser, Ernst et al., 2017; Ernst et al., 2017, 2019; Kalsnes, 2019), but more comparative research is needed. This includes both cross-country and longitudinal studies on the use of populist communication on social media, to understand how structural and situational factors (Blassnig, 2021) at the country level help or hinder the spread of populist communication. Our study provides a valuable starting point for future long-term comparisons in Norway.

Comparisons with larger datasets will hopefully also enable the conduction of analyses that we had originally envisioned for this study but that proved to be infeasible due to our data. For example, we had planned to apply a conceptual framework suggested by Jagers and Walgrave (2007) that differentiates four forms of populist communication: empty populism (only people-centrism present), anti-elitist populism (people-centrism plus anti-elitism), exclusionary populism (people-centrism plus exclusion of out-groups), and complete populism (all three elements present at the same time). However, we could not use this concept since too few posts contained anti-elite populism ($n = 149$), exclusionary populism ($n = 48$), and, particularly, complete populism ($n = 4$).

Another limitation of our research is that we only investigated the official social media accounts of political parties and actors and can thus not make any claims on the spread of populist communication beyond these pages. However, populist communication can also be utilised in other party-affiliated online communications, by other organisations, companies, and even citizens, and it can spread all over the political information environment on social media and beyond, for example, in news media (Blassnig, 2021; Jacobs et al., 2020). To better assess how widespread populist communication is, comprehensive analyses of various contributions to the public discourse are needed. Finally, on a theoretical note, given the interdisciplinarity of populism and populist communication as phenomena, future research should take more cross-disciplinary theoretical approaches to these topics.

Research has shown that populist communication can increase user engagement on social media (Blassnig & Wirz, 2019). From a strategic point of view, it can be a valuable means to raise attention for political actors' issues and positions of all kinds. Still, populism and populist communication are often considered as problematic and threatening, at least by authors taking liberal perspectives on democracy (Mouffe, 2019; Müller, 2016). We do not claim that populist communication is in general unproblematic. Rather, we call for preciseness about what exactly is considered problematic when discussing the phenomenon critically: populist communication per se, or that it resonates particularly well with illegitimate, anti-democratic, extremist positions (Mudde, 2016), particularly on social media?

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Endnotes

1 In the following, “populist communication” refers to populist political communication.

2 The project can be found at the following website:

<https://digidemo.ifkw.lmu.de/digiworld/>

Appendix

TABLE A1 Overview of the sample

	Party	Facebook (n)	Instagram (n)	Twitter (n)	All platforms (n)	Share of all posts from party (%)
Labour	Party	97	36	28	161	78
	Jonas Gahr Støre	35	7	4	46	22
	Total	132	43	32	207	100
Conserv- ative	Party	109	20	–	129	63
	Erna Sol- berg	37	18	21	76	37
	Total	146	38	21	205	100
Centre	Party	38	11	–	49	72
	Trygve Slagsvold Vedum	19	–	–	19	28
	Total	57	11	–	68	100
Progress	Party	62	17	–	79	47
	Sylvi Listhaug	47	43	–	90	53
	Total	109	60	–	169	100
Socialist Left	Party	74	79	101	254	47
	Audun Lysb- akken	60	99	132	291	53
	Total	134	178	233	545	100
Red	Party	123	78	84	285	59
	Bjørnar Moxnes	108	50	42	200	41
	Total	231	128	126	485	100
Liberal	Party	55	28	309	392	80
	Guri Melby	45	15	38	98	20
	Total	100	43	347	490	100

Christian People's	Party	39	9	–	48	71
	Kjell Ingolf Ropstad	13	7	–	20	29
	Total)	52	16	–	68	100
Green	Party	49	42	143	234	83
	Une Bastholm	20	17	10	47	17
	Total	69	59	153	281	100
All parties & politicians	All parties	725	320	665	1710	66
	All politicians	384	256	247	887	34
	Total	1,030	576	912	2,518 ^a	100

^a 5 of the posts we originally collected had been deleted by the account owners prior to our coding. The deleted posts are not included in Table A1.

TABLE A2 Reliability coefficients

	Variable	Brennan's & Prediger's kappa	Agreement (%)
People-centrism	1: References to the people	.838	92
	2.1: Blaming the elite (from any sector)	.781	89
	2.2: Questioning the elite's legitimacy to take decisions	.924	96
Anti-elitism	2.3: Calling for resistance against the elite and their ideas and direct popular decisions	.914	96
	2.4: Accusing the elite of betraying the people or acting against the people's interest	.962	98
Exclusion of outgroups	3.1: Ethnic or cultural "others"	.99	100
	3.2: Political "others" (holding allegedly minority opinions)	.905	95

Category descriptions

Populism

All categories refer to the entire post, including the first image/first minute of the first video, the caption, geotags, 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” (Mudde, 2004: 543).

The following criteria define populism:

- Antagonism between the people as a homogeneous group of common men and women, on the one hand, and the elite as a corrupt or incompetent group 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 characterised 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 analyse only the manifest content 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/majority of citizens. Populism is known to occur in fragments:

1. generalised 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,
3. or the thematisation of the dangerous others or a crisis rhetoric.

a) Criticism [criticism] of elites

These categories analyse whether a post criticises or attributes blame to the elite *in a general way*. All categories present in a post are coded with 1, all categories not present are coded with 0.

Category	Description	Code
criticism1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blaming the elite (from any sector) Blaming the elite as a group <i>in general</i> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calling for resistance against the elite and their ideas and direct popular decisions Calling for resistance against the ideas/ideology of the establishment. 	0/1
criticism4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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"). 	0/1

b) 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.

ATTENTION! Not every mention of the word “people”/ “folk”/ “befolkningen” means that this category is coded as present! It is important that the post creates a contrast between “the entire people” (for which the party/actor stands) and “the elite/the others”.

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” as described above. Explicit references to the Norwegian population when this reference is used to create a contrast between “the people” and “the elite” (e.g., being the only ones who act on behalf of the entire population; “Nå må politikere endelig lytte til befolkningen”, “Makta må tilbake til folket/norske folkevalgte”).	0/1

c) 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”	0/1