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Chapter 1 – Introduction: European elections and the voices of supporters on social media

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Aims and research questions

In this book, we investigate how supporters of populist parties use social media to voice their endorsement in the context of the European elections 2019. What drives this study is the wish to understand the motivations of people to support and potentially vote for populist parties. Unlike the bulk of previous research, however, we do not seek explanations in the official discourse of such parties, but in the discourse of supporters themselves. We believe that analysing the voices of supporters, and linking them to party political communications, provides a more comprehensive account of the phenomenon of resurgent populism.

Across the studies of different countries across Europe that make up the present volume, we focus on three aspects in particular. Firstly, we seek to identify what the language and visuals featured in social media comments, and the media practices around them, can tell us about what motivates people to vote for populist parties. Given the pan-European scope of the book, we also ask whether voter motivations are shared across different political contexts within Europe. Secondly, we discuss what role national identities and values play in motivating supporters to vote for populist parties. Again, we address the question if the data
analysed in the different chapters indicate the emergence of a pan-European identity. Finally, we analyse how the social media postings of populist parties are recontextualised in

[1] This introduction, the chapter on theorising populism and the conclusion were written by the whole authorial team, whereas the chapters on the different countries were written individually or in pairs. Author names are indicated for all chapters.

supporters' social media comments so that they are meaningful and constitute a voting motivation.

In the following, we will provide some background to the 2019 European elections. We then make the case for focusing on those elections, for investigating the voices of supporters rather than politicians and for analysing data from social media in particular. We will also discuss the methodologies that link the chapters, before we argue for the unusual format of a book with a veritable football team of authors. Finally, the reader can find short summaries of the individually authored chapters at the end of this introduction.

Background to the 2019 EU elections

In a seminal paper, Reif and Schmitt (1980) classified elections as either 'first-order' or 'second-order' elections. While first-order elections are most important for the electorate, as they decide on who will govern the country for the coming years, second-order elections are less important for voters, as they concern lesser offices at the regional, municipal and local levels or relate to the legislative representatives in presidential systems (see also Blind 2012). For this reason, second-order elections tend to show lower levels of voter participation and higher numbers of invalid votes. Also, the outcome of second-order elections is strongly linked to the performance of the governing domestic parties, which means that in a system of proportional representation, smaller, non-governing parties often benefit from votes that use second-order elections to protest against the governing parties (Norris and Reif 1997). Since voters consider second-order elections less consequential, they use their vote to express whether or not they are satisfied with the domestic parties (Reif and Schmitt 1980).

European elections, despite their importance for the legitimacy of the European Union, fall into the category of second-order elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; Norris and Reif 1997). The EU elections are a special case because they transcend national borders and have little impact on national power relations, and many voters also have trouble understanding the structure and functioning of the European polity. These findings from the 1980s still hold true for the 2019 European elections (Träger and Anders 2020). Even though voter participation was higher in the 2019 elections (51 per cent) than in the 2014 elections (42.54 per cent), it was still lower than in national elections. Looking at the results of governing versus non-governing parties, the outcome of the 2019 European elections depended on whether the electorate considered its vote as a way of showing its dissatisfaction with the current national government. Where they did, the respective governing parties suffered considerable losses.

The results of the 2019 European elections almost entirely overturned the previous composition of the European Parliament (Kaeding et al. 2020). The conservative, centre-right European People's Party (EPP) and the Socialists and Democrats (SandD) suffered

heavy losses (losing 38 and 35 seats respectively), which resulted in losing their overall majority. At the same time, the liberal Renew Europe group (RE), the Greens, the far-right Identity and Democracy group (ID), and non-attached MEPs made significant gains. Populist and Eurosceptic parties increased their representation by winning 29 per cent of the seats (Theodore 2020). According to Kohls and Müller (2019), the main reasons for this result can be traced back to questions related to the inclusion and exclusion of new parties into the existing groups. Theodore (2020:13) predicts that the EP will be "a more unpredictable body, as parties form groupings and determine their policy positions". Indeed, Matteo Salvini, leader of the Italian League party, has created the Identity and Democracy Group, an alliance of European right-wing parties.

In the 2019–2024 period, the composition of the EP changed for structural reasons, too. The 2019 elections were the first in which one of the 28 member states, the UK, was in the process of leaving the Union. As a result of Brexit, the EP has become smaller, and the number of representatives has been reduced from 751 to 705, which reverses the decades-long growth of the EU parliament (Theodore 2020).

Why focus on the 2019 EU elections?

There are several reasons motivating our selection of data from the context of the 2019 European elections. For one, these elections constitute an event that took place across various national contexts dedicated to the same principal objective and purpose: electing representatives to the European Union parliament. With the goal being the same across member states, examining the reactions to the various election campaigns allows observing commonalities and differences across different national contexts. Connected to this, the elections took place at the same time across contexts, permitting a synchronous perspective of populist party supporters' views.

Secondly, the European Union itself has been a contested entity since its inception, and, consequently, all discussions about it may involve general considerations of identity, culture, sovereignty, and so on. This is, for example, exemplified by the discourses around the UK's decision to leave the EU (see Koller et al. 2019). On the one hand, the Union has been criticised especially by populist parties across the different national contexts. In Italy, for example, the two main populist parties, the League and the Five Star Movement, have been mostly critical towards the European Union (Chiantera-Stutte 2018), although their position has frequently shifted in reaction to political alliances and temporary circumstances.

On the other hand, the EU has also been under scrutiny by public opinion in general, independently of voting intentions and political affiliations. Opinion polls that measure the attitude of the European public show that it has shifted many times since 2015 (https://eupinions.eu/de/trends) and, quite interestingly, highlight clear similarities among

the trends across EU member countries, with corresponding peaks and troughs. These similarities make it all the more important to focus on the attitude of populist parties supporters on a cross-European scale. In addition to this, in some countries such as, for instance, Italy, Hungary and Spain, the EU elections were perceived as a test for the performance of the government (so much so that in Italy the outcome of the elections even changed the balance within the coalition in power). Arguably, that is why many domestic topics entered the debate, giving rise to animated discussions among social media users, unlike what is usually expected from second-order elections such as the EU parliamentary elections (see previous section). In this context, the unique nature of these elections is also worth noting. The European Parliament is the only EU-wide institution that is elected directly by the citizens. Focusing on the political discussions arising from, and related to, these elections therefore provides a significant insight into political trends across Europe.

Another reason for choosing supporters' reactions to the 2019 EU election campaigns by populist parties as our data source relates to timing: in spring 2019, the EU enjoyed notable public attention across contexts because of the then recent developments regarding the UK's decision to leave the union. That is, in 2019, the EU elections, even though generally classified as second order elections, took on a special role as the first EU elections since a member state had decided to leave. At the same time, the elections took place before the Covid-19 pandemic hit and subsequently occupied public attention to the degree of almost totally eclipsing any other matters.

Why analyse the voices of supporters?

Earlier research on populism has – to a large extent – focused on the language and discourse of populist parties and politicians, while the language and discourses of the voters themselves have been given significantly less attention (but seeKoller and Miglbauer 2019; Stockemer 2019; Woodhams 2019). The shift in analytical focus to the voice of the people therefore appears to be a rather novel undertaking, which is somewhat surprising: after all, populism is primarily about the people and the voices of the people. When studying the supporters of populist parties and their motivations, so far, most research has relied upon large-scale surveys, in which attitudes and beliefs are explored, using variables such as socio-economic background, age and gender (see Spruyt et al. 2016, Jylhä et al. 2019; see also Chapter 2). Such surveys can provide information about the conscious and rationalised motivations among individuals but will give less information about how these motivations and positions play out in actual discourse, where they both affect and are affected by other voters as well as by party communications. Our book sets out to capture those dynamics and thus provide a better understanding of how voter motivations and party affinities are shaped, created and strengthened in discourse.

In our research, we are interested in what language use can tell us about what motivates people to vote for populist parties, candidates or causes. With the increasing access to data

from different social media channels, we are now able to analyse interaction in discourse and not only one-way communication from the party to its supporters. By examining this interaction, it is possible to gain insights into the attitudes, engagements and sentiments of "ordinary" people, the main addressees of populist parties. By studying supporters' discourse on social media, this book aims to shed light on how supporters perceive, discuss and reproduce populist politics. Furthermore, a common trope among populist supporters themselves is that their voices are not heard, that they are misunderstood and made invisible by mainstream politicians. Earlier research has referred to these voters as feeling "left behind" or "alienated in society" (see Chapter 2). By focusing on the interaction and discourse of the supporters, as played out on social media, we put our ear to the ground and listen to what they actually say. Through multifaceted analyses of data from the 2019 EU elections, we expect to gain a better understanding of how meaning is negotiated and how motivations are made relevant for and by the supporters in interaction. Identities, values and positions against – as well as the articulations of – the "elite" and "the others" are linguistically realised in evaluative and affective practices. Analysing the discourse of supporters is therefore also expected to clarify what role (national) identities and values play in motivating them to vote for populist parties.

Why look at social media?

Our motivation to examine the voices of populists' supporters on social media relates to the importance of social media as the main channel for disseminating populist messages that seemingly allows direct interaction between populist political actors and their supporters. There is a body of previous work on populist actors' extensive use of social media (Engesser et al. 2017; Ernst et al. 2017; Jost et al. 2020); however, the interaction of populist actors with their supporters is still underexplored. The analysis of the verbal and multimodal dimensions of populist supporters' voices on social media can reveal how interconnected networks of people participate in the dissemination of populist ideas by commenting, promoting and recontextualising the messages by populist political actors and how they construct their own and others' identity in relation to them.

Addressing the reasons for a strong "affinity" (Gerbaudo 2018) between social media and right- and left-wing populists, research indicates that social media provide an ideal channel for populist communication because populist politicians' messages posted there reach potential supporters directly and without gatekeepers, invoking the support of ordinary people against the establishment (Engesser et al. 2017; Ernst et al. 2017; Esser et al. 2017; Groshek and Koc-Michalska 2017; Krämer 2017; Gil de Zúñiga et al. 2020). By using social media populist actors present themselves as close to the people and differentiate themselves from the elites, emphasising that they do not assume the rules imposed by the elites (Engesser et al. 2017). Moreover, the design of social media as self-publishing platforms allows ordinary people to express themselves as an opposition to the pro-establishment bias of mainstream media. In this sense, the suitability of social media for

populist politics derives from such many-to-many, horizontal participation (or the appearance of it), which results in a surrogate public sphere, whereby online popularity (e.g. the number of "likes") is used as a proxy for consensus. Furthermore, social media foster affective communication between users, something that suits populist style and appeal to emotions. Other factors that contribute to the affinity between social media and populists are algorithms favouring controversial content (Jungherr et al. 2019); Twitter especially is a very useful channel of communication for populist actors due to its simplicity, impulsivity and incivility (Ott 2017), all of which are features that are also typical of the discourse of both populist politicians and their supporters.

Another important factor is the aggregation logic embedded in social media algorithms. Gerbaudo (2018) argued that social media have favoured the rise of populist movements because of filter bubbles (Pariser 2011) and the network effect. While the former restricts users' attention to content that conforms to their existing ideological standpoints, the latter refers to the tendency that makes highly connected nodes likely to become even more connected An additional factor is the crisis of authority of mainstream news media since the economic crisis of 2008 (Carr et al. 2014) and growing popular hostility to these media, as well as the perception of the mainstream media as agents that respond to the agenda of their rich owners and their political allies, rather than to the needs and interests of the public (McChesney 2015). In this context, social media have come to be perceived as the voice for the unrepresented and voiceless – the "real" people. By looking at verbal and multimodal dimensions of populist supporters' voices on social media, we are interested in examining how networks of people participate in the dissemination of populist ideas by commenting, discussing and promoting messages by populist political actors, how they recontextualise these messages, and how they construct their own and others' identity in relation to them.

Methodologies

The variety of methods and analytical tools used in this book does not only have to be acknowledged but also explained. There are two aspects that have to be considered in relation to this: similarities and differences in data compilation, and the wide array of frameworks used in the analyses. In terms of qualitative analysis (see Chapters 9, 11 and 12 for additional quantification), content as well as different linguistic cues and discourse strategies have been analysed in each of the chapters. A number of parallels and similarities can be found: all the chapters focus, to varying degrees, on the analysis of social actors, mostly in relation to the three constitutive elements of populist discourses, i.e. the people, the nation and others. Thus, the analyses of German, Austrian, Slovenian and Croatian, and English and Welsh voices make explicit reference to van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy for the representation of social actors. Although not explicitly mentioned as such, this taxonomy also guides the interpretation of referential expressions used by Spanish supporters. Indeed, lexical choices and referential expressions used to name the self and the others appear in all

case studies. What can therefore be observed is an at least implicit focus on identifying an opposition between 'us' and 'them' in all the chapters, thus confirming findings of previous studies on populist discourses (Wodak 2015a; Zienkowski and Breeze 2019a).

In some case studies (notably Scotland, Sweden, Spain and France), this discursive configuration is combined with the analysis of personal pronouns and their relation to positioning strategies; for example, some references to positioning can be seen in the study of pronouns used by supporters' voices in Spain and Scotland. However, it is the notion of evaluation that appears prominently across the case studies. Evaluation has been approached by the individual authors through three different analytical foci: the aforementioned positioning (Sweden), (conceptual) metaphors (in the chapters on England and Wales as well as Spain), and Martin and White's (2005) appraisal framework (in the chapters on Slovenia, Croatia and Italy). In those chapters where no explicit reference is made to the analysis of evaluation, it is still implicitly covered by the analysis of the lexical choices made by supporters.

Discourses of supporters have a social impact inasmuch as they legitimise the party's existence and actions. This is closely related to the explanation of the social effect of the messages under analysis. While not explicitly covered throughout the book, references can be found in some chapters to the argumentative strategies used in supporters' discourses, notably for the Spanish, Austrian, Hungarian and Slovenian contexts. This is the case when populist topoi (Wodak 2015a) are identified, such as the need to defend the self from an external threat. The analysis of argumentation also features as a prominent method of analysis in the French case study, where references to ethical arguments – mostly related to the role of the leader – are made. (The importance of the leader can be also seen in the comments by Italian, Hungarian, Slovenian and Swedish supporters of populist parties.) Situated within argumentation, legitimisation can be seen as the key performative effect of supporters' discourses. This is clearest in the chapter on Hungary, where a classification of supporters' message is made along van Leeuwen's (2007) taxonomy of discursive legitimation strategies.

The different analytical approaches followed in each of the chapters cover a wide array of micro and macro strategies in the analysis of discourse. It needs to be noted, however, that all the approaches mentioned above focus mostly on the linguistic mode. As explained in the introduction and theory chapters of this book, social media discourses are multimodal in nature (Zappavigna 2015, 2018). Different approaches to multimodality can be seen in the chapters dealing with German, Austrian, Italian, Spanish and Scottish voices of supporters. These five chapters demonstrate that the intersubjective identity of supporters is not only constructed via language but also relies on other kinds of cues. Amongst these, emojis are the aspect which is most widely considered in the chapters which explicitly refer to the

multimodal nature of posts on social media. We can see this as a category of analysis in the chapters on Germany, Italy and Spain, although the use of emojis also permeates the examples included in most other chapters of the book. Designing individual methodologies while still aiming for overall coherence was something that came up in many discussions during our joint work on this book. The next section will look closer at collaboration as a group.

Collaborating on a multi-authored book

The present book features no fewer than eleven authors.1 As it is very rare in the humanities and social sciences to find books with such a high number of authors, we believe that reflecting about the experience of working on a team project like this one can also help us advocate for a more collaborative – in the view of some authors (Bagilhole and Goode 2001; Corbera et al. 2020) even a more feminist – academia. Even if managing a balanced amount of work for eleven academics at the same time is not without its difficulties, the benefits of collaborative work certainly outnumber the problems and can also help in addressing some of the issues previously identified in higher education (Gill 2010). These benefits can be grouped into three broad areas: academic, personal and socio-political. From a purely academic perspective, we believe that collaborative work can result in more solid academic work which benefits not only from different perspectives but also from the ability to explore larger sets of data. This is only possible, however, by approaching collaboration from both an additive and an integrative perspective (Eisenhart and Borko 1991; Tynan and Garbett 2007). In our case, the additive approach can be seen in Chapters 3 to 11, which include studies of populism in different countries. These were written individually, or in pairs, by the different academics involved in this project. This addition would not have been possible though without applying an integrative approach when writing the theoretical chapter of this book, which proposes a shared definition of populism and formulates three research questions that underlie the case studies.

Combining additive and integrative approaches to collaboration allows not only for the study of more data (as shown in the range of nations and social media platforms included in this book) and methods, but also enables us to arrive at more solid conclusions about support for populist parties than would be possible for a single-authored monograph. As such, we see this book as a good example of how triangulation, a cornerstone of critical discourse studies (Weiss and Wodak 2003a), can work in practice.

This academic benefit has been accompanied by a focus on the personal wellbeing of all the academics involved in writing this book. Previous studies on the nature of academic labour show that it is increasingly characterised by precariousness, overwhelming workloads (and the resulting emotional cost) or toxic shaming of others (often leading to imposter syndrome), all of which result from the neoliberalisation of universities (see Gill 2010 for an overview of personal narratives about these issues). While the Covid-19 pandemic has

exacerbated some of these problems, the experience of meeting each other regularly online and working collaboratively on this book has proved that an "ethics of care" in which we have become "more attentive to the diverse and at time conflicting emotions and life experiences of our" co-workers (Corbera et al. 2020: 192) definitely improves our working conditions. Working together on this book has not only opened new means of collaboration, but it has also allowed for paired collaboration while writing specific sections of the book. This has allowed us to create networks of support and has helped counteract imposter syndrome and increasing competition in academia. Collaborative work has made us celebrate each milestone in the research as a group and has enabled us to share responsibility by addressing each problem collectively. As a group, we have learned that it is trust, care and respect for each other's life and work that makes us grow personally and advance academically.

Last but not least, it is important to remember that this book was written by critical discourse scholars. In our view, this implies not only identifying how discourse contributes to inequalities, but also adopting a critical socio-political stance towards them. As mentioned above, increasing individualism and competition are some of the consequences of the neoliberalisation of higher education and the increasing marketisation of academia. Writing a book collaboratively at a time when doing so is not only unusual but also unlikely to be considered in our individual national research evaluations is in itself a form of adopting a stance on academic life. In the midst of growing voices calling for significant changes in
academia (Tynan and Garbett 2007; Walsh and Kahn 2010; Corbera et al. 2020; Derrick 2020), we consider that it is our role as critical discourse analysts not only to be critical of those institutional discourses which advocate for competition and individualism but also to increase collaboration in our own working practices.

Overview of the chapters

The remainder of this book is structured as follows: in the following chapter, we provide a definition of populism that informs the subsequent individual case studies. We also discuss relevant previous works to show what still remains to be done in research on populist discourse and outline how the present book helps to address that gap. The definition of populism on which the country case studies are based is as follows:

Populism is a political strategy and/or practice, realised in discourse, that is based on a dichotomy between "the people", who are unified by their will, and an out-group whose actions are not in the interest of the people, with a leader safeguarding the interests of the people against the out group.

Chapters 3 to 12 comprise the individual case studies. These are ordered geographically, starting in Central Europe (Germany, Austria), then moving to Eastern (Hungary, Croatia,

Slovenia), Southern (Italy, Spain) and Western (France, United Kingdom) Europe before concluding in the North (Sweden). As discussed above, the UK had a special role in the 2019 European elections, having voted to leave the union three years previously. As the results of the 2016 referendum showed very different results in England and Wales (Leave majority) compared to Scotland's (and Northern Ireland's) Remain majority, it seemed sensible to dedicate a chapter each to those different parts of the country. In the following, we present a short overview of the individual chapters.

Germany

Chapter 3, written by Marlene Miglbauer, focuses on German supporters of the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany or AfD) on Facebook. The study investigates which right-wing populist conceptualisations are drawn upon when expressing support and constructing identities (in- and outgroups). 1,479 direct replies to the original post covering the election campaign for the EU elections in four threads were selected from the official AfD Facebook page. Findings show that populist conceptualisations such as "saving", and speaking for, the people, denouncing the elite (i.e. mainstream parties and media, the EU) and belittling outgroups (non-AfD voters) are crucial drivers for voting AfD and for constructing the identities of in- and outgroups. In doing so, AfD supporters draw on linguistic resources specific to social media (paralinguistic cues, use of emojis) and populist discourse (vagueness, use of derogatory terms), resulting in populist conceptualisations and right-wing rhetoric being an integral part of the comments by AfD supporters.

Austria

The chapter on the Austrian context, authored by Susanne Kopf, focuses on the right-wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) as the most successful populist party in Austria. The analysis suggests that past findings on the FPÖ's discursive choices are reflected in the discourse of the party's supporters. For example, FPÖ supporters focus on representing Austria and Austrians as the ingroup threatened by the Other, i.e. by immigrants, the EU and other Austrian parties. Moreover, and again mirroring the FPÖ's discourse, the supporters represent the party, and especially its leaders, as moral and upright and as the only one(s) championing and defend-
ing the Austrian ingroup's interests. Interestingly, there is no detailed discussion of what it means for the FPÖ to champion Austria and what concrete actions are taken. This lack of specific action along with equating the FPÖ with Austria and representing it as the country's advocate may be advantageous for the party: citizens who align with nationalism and an equally unspecified Austrian national identity are invited to identify the FPÖ as representing their interests regardless of any concrete actions.

Hungary

In this chapter, Natalia Borza offers insights into the motivations of supporters of a right-wing populist party in the Hungarian context. The study investigates what motivated people to vote for the governing party Fidesz to act as a representative of the Hungarian people in an international context. The focus here is on what values and identities played a role in shaping the voting preference of the party's supporters. Postings from the Facebook page of Fidesz were collected (N=165), and a sample of the first 500 comments that attracted most likes and replies (N=495) given in response to the Facebook postings of the party were analysed using van Leeuwen's (2007) framework of legitimation strategies. The comments which applied legitimation strategies were juxtaposed with the postings of the party in order to uncover how the discourse participants recontextualised the original postings to legitimise support for the party. The linguistic constructions of legitimation that the supporters used showed a rich variety, promoting a system of values that involved norms both at the individual level of the supporters and at the social level of their community. The recontextualisations of the social media postings appeared to stem from the general sentiment that the supporters feel at home in their native country and nurture a grateful relationship with their own generic community.

Croatia and Slovenia

Chapter 6, by Ljiljana Šarić, examines the argumentation of populist parties' supporters in Croatia and Slovenia. In the context of the 2019 elections for the EU parliament, only one populist party was somewhat visible in Croatia: Živi zid (Human Shield), a party close to left-wing or social populism. By contrast, a number of populist parties (mostly right-wing) were influential in Slovenia. As in the other chapters, the analysis here addresses the main research questions of this book: what motivations populists' supporters voice and what idenities they construct. The chapter utilises appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005), particularly focusing on affect and judgement. It also uses theoretical notions and tools of critical discourse analysis, concentrating on identity construction and the representation of social actors (van Leeuwen 2008; Wodak et al. 2009). For Croatia, the material is 760 Facebook comments on an election video, while for Slovenia 131 online comments on various election-related news stories were analysed. The findings show that the main factor for Croatian discussants supporting the left-leaning Živi zid was discontent with the economic situation and the country's political elites. Very few posts topicalised the EU. The dominant identity constructed was one of disadvantaged 'ordinary people' oppressed by a morally deficient Other: corrupt political elites. The driving forces for discussants supporting Slovenian right-wing populists were mainly anti-immigrant attitudes and protecting Slovenian values (traditional, conservative and Christian), which were represented as endangered. Contemporary Europe was perceived as changing for the worse, and right-wing parties were represented as saviours.

Italy

In Chapter 7, Valeria Reggi shows how the Italian Lega (League) and its leader Matteo Salvini exemplify the tenets and communication style of right-wing populism, in which oppositional discourse is imbued with nationalistic overtones and systematically disseminated on social media. The analysis of supporters' comments on Salvini's postings on Twitter foregrounds what encouraged support for his party. Specific attention is given to the role played by national identity and by the strategies that were chosen to recontextualise the original postings. The analysis draws upon appraisal theory (Martin and White 2005) to bring to the fore the type of attitude that is associated with core populist themes such as people, elites, leadership, nationalism and the European Union. By measuring the quantity of these ideation-attitude occurrences (Zappavigna 2019b) the study foregrounds the ingroups and outgroups that emerged among the supporters of the Lega during the EU election campaign of 2019. Due to the highly multimodal nature of social media, the method is also applied to the visual resources and the tags included in the tweets. Findings show that ingroup membership was mainly defined by emotionally celebrating the party and its leader. Although nationalism played a role, the supporters mostly chose to express it through standardised visual imagery (flags, colours, symbols) but very rarely resorted to anti-elitism or Euroscepticism to define the outgroup.

Spain

Laura Filardo-Llamas' Chapter 8 focuses on Spain and studies supporters' comments to, and recontextualisation of, the Twitter postings of the right-wing populist party Vox. Following the identification of three key elements in populist discourse by previous studies (Canovan 1999; Wodak 2015a), the chapter identifies similarities between Vox's and its supporters' discursive construction of the self, of the nation as the heartland and of other social and political actors. The analysis is based on 400 tweets produced by supporters of Vox, 200 during the 2019 European elections and 200 during the general election in Spain in the same Year. The qualitative analysis adopts tools from cognitive linguistics and multimodality and identifies the strategies followed by Vox supporters to construct their identity, mainly along three dimensions: the self, the others and the nation. The analysis shows a blend being discursively established between the political party, its supporters and the nations, suggesting a nativist stance. There was a lot of variation when it came to the construction of the Other, which were not only other political parties, but also other social groups, such as Muslims. The existence of Vox was legitimised by supporters not only as a means for maintaining a Spanish identity within Spain, but also within Europe. The central status of the nation could be seen not only in the verbal elements of the tweets, but also in visual ones, including emojis.

France

In Chapter 9, Maria Stopfner focuses on France, where long-time party leader Marine Le Pen turned the formerly rightwing extremist Front National (National Front) into a "modern" populist party, the Rassemblement National (National Rally), which appeals to a broader

electorate. As part of her strategy of renewal, Le Pen appointed Jordan Bardella, a 23-year-old politician with little prior experience, to be lead candidate for the 2019 election to the European Parliament. The chapter shows how populist supporters respond to the different lines of argumentation put forth by these two politicians. Based on 801 tweets that were published on Le Pen's and Bardella's official Twitter accounts, the qualitative analysis adopts a discourse-historical approach with a special focus on the recontextualisation of argumentation and rhetoric as well as identity construction. The results show that the main reasons for supporting the Rassemblement National were not seen as populist by its supporters, but as logical and common-sense.

England and Wales

In this first of two chapters on the United Kingdom, Veronika Koller focuses on England and Wales. The two nations returned a majority vote to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum and, not coincidentally, the Brexit Party was particularly strong among their electorates in the 2019 European Parliament elections. It is the Instagram account of the Brexit Party that provides the data for this chapter, in the form of eleven substantial posts and threads in the run-up to the election. Adopting a data-driven approach, supporters' comments are analysed for social actor representation, appraisal and metaphor as well as visual elements to identify the discursive constructions of actors that are relevant for Brexit Party supporters in the European elections. The analysis also addresses how the Brexit Party's original posts are recontextualised in supporters' comments to become a source of voting motivation. Findings show that the discourse of Brexit Party supporters on Instagram focused on three main social and political actors, who were cast in specific roles: the EU and its representatives were constructed as oppressors, other British parties, especially Labour, and Remain voters were seen as traitors, and the Brexit Party and its leader were perceived as saviours. The original posts mainly attacked political opponents and celebrated the successes of the Brexit Party, with only one post topicalising the EU. The supporters took cues from the original postings and intensified the attitudes expressed in them, thus providing an emotional motivation to vote for the Brexit Party.

Scotland

The political discourse and identity of the supporters of the SNP (Scottish National Party) are the focus of Chapter 11, contributed by Massimiliano Demata. The chapter analyses a dataset of 331 tweets by SNP supporters in response to 30 tweets and retweets published on the official SNP Twitter account (@theSNP) between 11 and 23 May 2019. The methodology used to analyse this data set draws on the key discourse strategies identified by the discourse-historical approach (DHA) to analyse social categories and collective identities (KhosraviNik 2010; Koller 2012), and specifically national identity, in discourse (Wodak et al. 2009; Wodak 2015b). These strategies are combined with the framework offered by Zappavigna in her analysis of hashtags, identified as instruments of "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna 2011), which communicate and share social identities as well as

personal feelings. The analysis reveals that SNP supporters on Twitter were more radicalised than the party leadership: Sturgeon and the other SNP leaders directed their tweets mainly towards the EU and Brexit, but party supporters, while displaying largely EU-friendly attitudes, still prioritised demands for Scottish independence and constantly highlighted a populist/nationalist dichotomy of the Scottish people vs the Westminster elite.

Sweden

The focus of Chapter 12, written by Anna W. Gustafsson and Charlotta Seiler Brylla, is the discourse of the supporters of Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats), a nationalist right-wing populist party with roots in neo-Nazism and white supremacist beliefs. The party has experienced continuous progress during the last decade in Sweden, attracting 20.5 per cent of the vote in the general election of 2022. A combination of discourse analytical methods is applied to study the comment sections of the official social media accounts of the party (Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter) in order to explore what topics were most engaging to the supporters and what discursive strategies the supporters used to position themselves in relation to politicians, to other parties or to political topics. Particular attention is paid to the role of affirmative and evaluative practices to build ingroup identity. One of the main findings is that the supporters engaged in posts that articulate discontent with the state of the country or other parties. Their main antagonist was the Social Democrats. Anti-immigration positions were voiced frequently and often equated immigration with criminality. Another finding is that common identities were that of the victim or the misunderstood, the worried or scared citizen. Finally, the analysis brings to light the Sweden Democrats' extensive use of social media to elicit both positive and negative affective reactions from their supporters.

In the final, concluding chapter of the book, we will derive answers to our overarching research questions from the findings of the individual chapters, revisit our methodologies and discuss our ethical stance. We will also outline the contributions and limitations of our work and provide an outlook on further research on discourses of populism.