

D3.1

Definitions and operationalisations of populist narratives

[WP3 – Narrative Analysis and ICT Tools]



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Information in this report that may influence other PaCE tasks

The information contributes to tasks in WP4 (i.e. policy risk analysis, scenario development) and WP5 (dissemination, public and educational resources).

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1. Introduction

The team from Technische Universität Dresden (TUD) takes the lead in providing definitions and operationalisations of populist, nativist and liberal democratic narratives for empirical research and content analysis (T3.1). TUD also has the obligation to employ Hermeneutic Computational Narrative Analysis (HCNA) to identify populist narratives and to locate these in the public media (T3.2).

First step within this task was a literature review that aimed at finding a conclusive definition for narratives that is applicable to the concepts of populism, nativism and liberal democracy and can be operationalised to find respective communication. Following the evaluation of literature from linguistics, communication science, and political science, we define narrative as follows: Narratives are patterns of interpretations assigning social actors to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Patterson & Monroe, 1998; Prince, 1980; Propp, 1928; Somers, 1994). They can be distinguished from related concepts (e.g. frames) by their action-based and dynamic nature.

Populism can be regarded as a thin ideology that is based on the antagonism between the ‘pure homogenous people’ and the corrupt elite. It propagates politics as the expression of the general will of the people (Mudde, 2004). Bringing the definition of narratives and populism together, this results in the following definition of populist narratives: Populist narratives are patterns of interpretations assigning the people and the elite to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot.

According to Pappas (2018), nativists stand on the conservative right and aim to conserve its country’s ethnocultural identity, but do not violate the constitution. They conceive of their societies as having a certain cultural unity that is jeopardized by the arrival of immigrants (Pappas, 2018). Nativist narratives assign the natives and the non-natives (e.g. immigrants) to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot.

Objective 3.1 also calls for the identification of liberal democratic counter-narratives as opposed to populist and nativist narratives. Liberal democracy focuses on the self-responsibility and self-realisation of the individual, as well as personal freedom and protection from excessive state interventions (see Habermas, 1996). The liberal democratic point of view sees modern society as divided by many, often cross-cutting cleavages, promotes political moderation and consensus to overcome these cleavages and commits to the rule of law and minority rights (Pappas, 2018). Liberalism is the essential part of the pluralist democratic concept of societies and includes ideas of rule of law, guarantees of universal human rights, as well as the protection of minorities. Liberal democratic narratives assign the liberal democrats and the illiberals to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot.

Originally, the proposal also included the identification of anti-democratic narratives but an exploratory data analysis proved it difficult to find such anti-democratic communication, especially in narrative form, due to two interrelated reasons: First, making public anti-democratic statements infringes a social taboo in many European countries or is even against the law. Second, there are hardly any relevant anti-democratic parties now in Europe (the Greek Golden Dawn being one of the rare exceptions). In addition to this, the consortium decided during the meeting in Brussels (25th-26th June 2019) that it ethically and possibly legally problematic to brand statements as anti-democratic. For this reason, we refrained from taking antidemocratic narratives into account any further in the PaCE Project. Instead, we focused on finding liberal democratic narrative content with different indicators. While this worked out to some extent, we discuss further along in this report why we changed our approach to a different methodology.

Using the definitions mentioned above, we developed an operationalisation to find populist and nativist public narratives in different media content. In this report, apart from an extensive explanation of narrative definitions and an operationalisation for content analysis already mentioned above, we describe the developing process of several keyword lists (dictionaries) to extract content from the CommonCrawl dataset and our validation strategies. This corresponds with T3.2. Using the extracted CommonCrawl content, we conducted a content analysis with

an especially developed codebook ensuring a systematic coding process. We also discuss the results from our first round of coding towards a narrative typology and the description of a second content analysis with different data to conclude our narrative typology. Figure 1 shows the steps taken in WP3 towards a narrative typology.

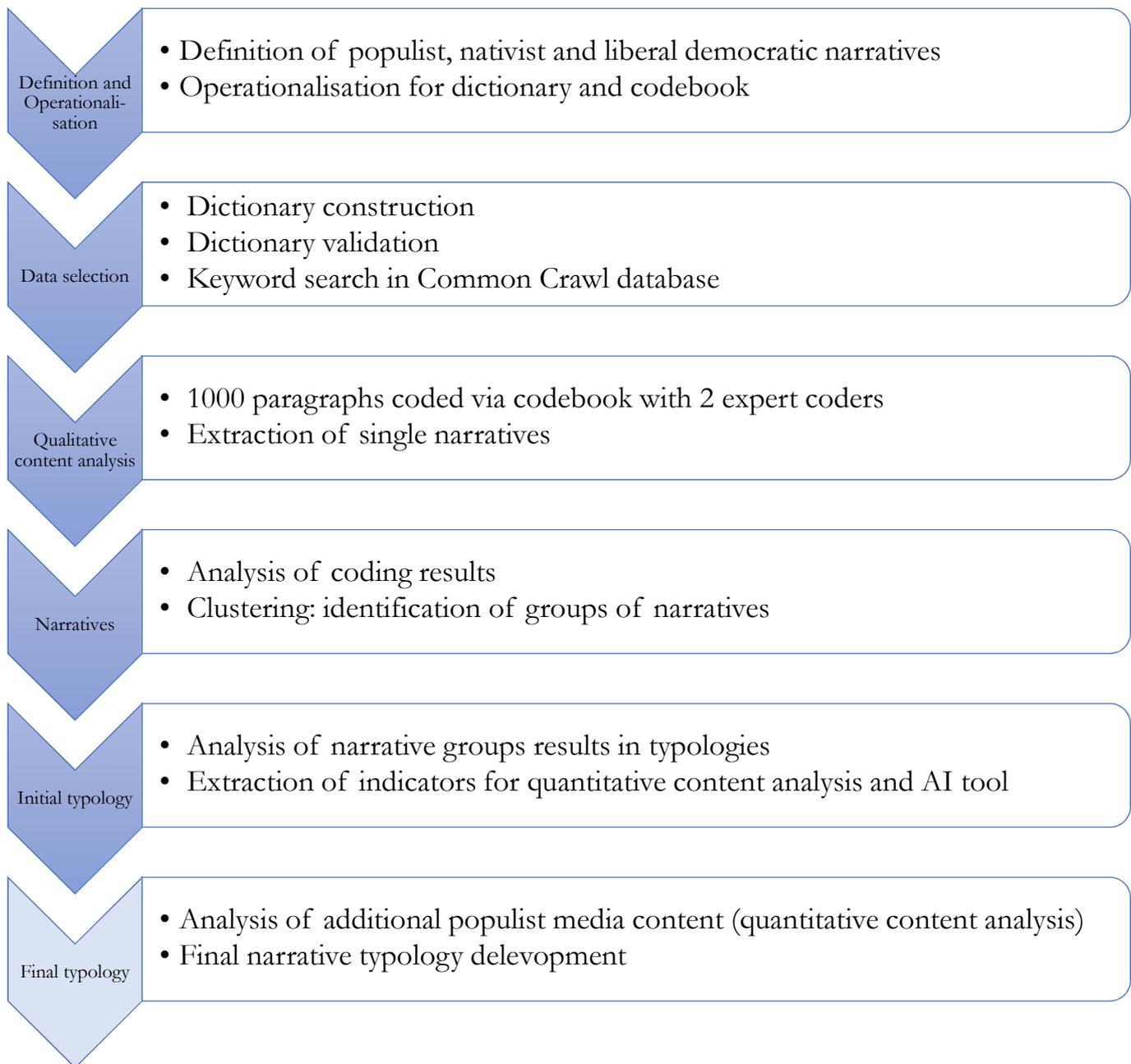


Figure 1: Steps towards narrative indicators and a typology in WP3



2. Defining and operationalising populist and nativist narratives

The human brain seems to be designed for stories. Man is therefore often referred to as „homo narrans“. Shenhav even goes so far as to say that people think in narratives (Shenhav 2005: 76). We tell stories of life, death, resurrection, success as we tell our own personal life story or that of our country. The semantic structure that such a story follows seems intuitive and it also seems to work across different cultures. People from various cultures can usually continue to tell an existing story without any problems (Prince 1980: 49). Accordingly, literary studies were also one of the first disciplines to deal with the concept of narration or narrative (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 317, Gadinger, Jarzebski & Yildiz 2014: 3). Initially, the focus was on the representation of bodies of knowledge in texts. Later, this understanding shifted from "representational narrativity" to "ontological narrativity" (Somers 1994: 613). Narratives were thus no longer just representations of bodies of knowledge, but bodies of knowledge themselves, with the help of which people gain knowledge and understanding of the world around them and give it meaning (Somers 1994: 606, Patterson & Monroe 1998: 316). Narratives, however, not only contribute to understanding, but can also motivate action. Accordingly, the term became interdisciplinary from the 1960s onwards - anthropology, history, political science and psychology dealt with the different individual and collective narratives (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 316, Gadinger et al. 2014: 4). Different narratives exist simultaneously in a society. An individual does not create its own story, but embeds itself in already existing narratives (Somers 1994: 606). According to this view, social identity is created by embedding oneself in socially existing narratives. In the process, such narratives must be told and reproduced repeatedly, whereby they solidify and only in this way offer "stabilisierte Interpretationen der Wirklichkeit [stabilized interpretations of reality]" (Llanque 2014: 8), and can develop effectiveness through this (Braddock & Dillard 2016: 16).

With Somers (1994), four different types of narratives can be distinguished: ontological, public, conceptual, and metanarrative. Ontological narratives give meaning to one's own individual life. They define who we are and are a prerequisite for how we act (Somers 1994: 618). Public narratives extend beyond the individual and are tied to cultural and institutional formations. They narrate one's family, workplace, or nation, for example, in the form of founding myths (Somers 1994: 619): "[J]ust as we can learn about personal identity through the stories people tell about themselves, we can understand national perceptions through the stories people tell about their nation" (Sheafer, Shenhav & Goldstein 2010: 315). Patterson & Monroe (1998: 326) also refer to ontological and public narratives as "lay narratives," which are in contrast to conceptual narratives. While the latter are similar to public narratives in that they also refer to larger groups, they are constructed exclusively in social science. In the form of a scientific theory or paradigm, social forces such as institutional constraints are then included. Metanarratives – or masternarratives – in turn are even larger narratives, e.g., of progress, growth, enlightenment, or political ideologies such as capitalism or communism (Somers 1994: 620). These metanarratives, in turn, provide orientations for smaller subordinate narratives as higher-level orders of meaning (Gadinger et al. 2014: 26). Most relevant for the PaCE project are public narratives as shared narratives of larger social groups, and metanarratives, as narratives of a particular ideology.

Narratives as stories of different groups or whole nations can be in conflict with each other (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 320, Foroutan 2014: 14). Conflicts arise primarily from the fact that narratives are always normative. "By suggesting both what is a norm and what is a departure from the norm, all narrative suggests an



interpretation of what the state of the world ought to be." (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 321). Accordingly, narratives are also used in political debates. If a political actor wants to change social conditions, they must consequently change the narratives in which society tells itself (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 321-322). For example, Foroutan (2014) states for Germany that it has not yet succeeded in generating a "Erzählung [...], die eine neue, plurale und heterogene nationale Identität formuliert [narrative that formulates a new, plural and heterogeneous national identity]" (Foroutan 2014: 1). Currently, in Germany, political community is not narrated as shapeable and inclusive, but as a "historisch geerbtes, exklusives Narrativ [historically inherited, exclusive narrative]" (Foroutan 2014: 10) which excludes those who do not share the story (see also Foroutan, Canan, Arnole, Schwarze, Beigang & Kalkum 2015). In general, "Rückwärtsgeschichten [backward-looking stories]" seem to be more common than "Vorwärtsgeschichten [forward-looking stories]". This is especially true in times of crisis. Instead of answering questions about the future, people fall back into the narratives that report on crises that have been overcome (Gadinger, Jarzebski & Yildiz 2014: 17). This plays into the hands of certain political actors. For example, one characteristic of populist actors is to describe a "golden past" in which crises were overcome (Priester 2012; Taggart 2000). The restoration or return to past conditions is then narrated as the solution to current social and political problems.

Narratives as narrative forms have a specific structure. As previously described, current events and problem situations are linked to events in the past or the future in order to provide an explanation for the present and to give meaning to current events. According to Somers (1994: 616), the meaning of a single event can only be understood as a narrative if it is related to other events in time and/or space. Somers (1994) uses the term "emplotment" here to describe the embedding of individual events in a larger context. The embedding does not ensue by simple categorization, but by a logical, causal connection of events ("causal emplotment").

Accordingly, Somers states: "[N]arratives are constellations of relationships (connected parts) embedded in time and space, constituted by causal emplotment" (Somers 1994: 616, emphasis in original). As for the temporal order of events, Prince (1980: 49) emphasizes that events must be narrated in a chronological order. Event A must precede event B and, accordingly, C must follow. To fulfill this condition, one can only speak of a narrative if at least two events are connected (Prince 1980: 50). Labov (1999, cited in Shenhav 2005: 80) also refers to this as "minimal narrative" - that is, the most basal version of a narrative. In addition to the temporal linkage in chronological order, however, there must also be a causal linkage so that a narrative of a sequence of events becomes a narrative. Hence, chronicles, for example, are not narratives. They "tell" events in chronologically correct order, but do not causally link them (Prince 1980: 81).

The selection of the first narrated event is a crucial point in the content design of a narrative. First, it is relevant whether an event in the past or in the present is chosen as the starting point. "[P]olitical perception of a person who begins his or her national story with a mythical past and tells the collective future in terms of a 'strong nation' will probably differ from a person who begins his or her story with the establishment of the modern state and prefers a future of 'civil equality'" (Sheafer, Shenhav & Goldstein 2010: 315). Foroutan (2014) identifies the "Entstehung einer geläuterten Nation nach der totalen Zerstörung im Zweiten Weltkrieg [emergence of a purified nation after the total destruction in the Second World War]" as a commonly shared founding myth for Germany (Foroutan 2014: 20). The initial event here, then, is the end of World War II in Germany. How the story of Germany is then further told, differs, for example, between East and West Germany. In the West, the "Wirtschaftswunder [economic miracle]" or the political movement of the 60s are used as further events, in the East it is often the 17th of June 1953 (people's uprising). Gadinger, Jarzebski & Yildiz (2014) also emphasize the importance of the respectively chosen event beginning. For them, the choice of



when to begin is a "machtpolitischer Akt [power-political act]" (Gadinger, Jarzebski & Yildiz 2014: 12) that decides what should be included in a story and thus what interpretive framework is set.

A good example to illustrate this is provided by the policy statements of German parties. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) sets the starting point at the failure of the Weimar Republic and then links the end of the war and the peaceful revolution of 1989. "Die CDU wurde von Bürgerinnen und Bürgern gegründet, die nach dem Scheitern der Weimarer Republik, den Verbrechen des Nationalsozialismus und angesichts des kommunistischen Herrschaftsanspruchs nach 1945 die Zukunft Deutschlands mit einer christlich geprägten Volkspartei gestalten wollten. [...] Zur Identität der CDU gehören auch die friedliche Revolution von 1989, die die kommunistische Diktatur der DDR überwand, und die Wiedervereinigung unseres Vaterlandes [The CDU was founded by citizens who, after the failure of the Weimar Republic, the crimes of National Socialism, and in the face of the Communist claim to power after 1945, wanted to shape the future of Germany with a Christian-based people's party. [...] The identity of the CDU also includes the peaceful revolution of 1989, which overcame the communist dictatorship of the GDR, and the reunification of our fatherland.]" (CDU 2007: 4-5). The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) states: "Nach zwei mörderischen Weltkriegen und dem Holocaust haben die Völker Europas im 20. Jahrhundert einen Kontinent des Friedens und der offenen Grenzen geschaffen. Die friedlichen Revolutionen von 1989 haben die Spaltung Europas in Ost und West überwunden. [After two murderous world wars and the Holocaust, the peoples of Europe created a continent of peace and open borders in the 20th century. The peaceful revolutions of 1989 overcame the division of Europe into East and West]" (SPD 2007: 7). In both cases, the choice of the beginning of the event tells a story of democracy and liberation from dictatorship and injustice. With the different events linked to it - the peaceful revolution in 1989 and thus the liberation from the SED dictatorship in eastern Germany - this story is continued.

The right-wing populist Alternative for Germany (AfD) takes a completely different approach. The end of the Second World War is not mentioned at all in its manifesto. The AfD chooses the March Revolution of 1848 in Germany as the starting point of its narrative for Germany. "In der Tradition der beiden Revolutionen von 1848 und 1989 artikulieren wir mit unserem bürgerlichen Protest den Willen, die nationale Einheit in Freiheit zu vollenden [In the tradition of the two revolutions of 1848 and 1989, we articulate with our civic protest the will to complete national unity in freedom]" (AfD 2016: 6). Thus, the starting point is still connected with the idea of democracy, but focuses on Germany becoming a nation. The AfD also chooses the peaceful revolution of 1989 as the second event point, though by choosing the starting point (March Revolution of 1848), this is not an example of liberation from dictatorships here, but becomes a second example of Germany becoming a nation. Despite the fact that all three parties refer to the peaceful revolution of 1989 in Germany, the different choice of the starting point sets two different emphases and interpretive frameworks.

This described linking of events alone does not result in a complete narrative. A change of a state must be included (Prince 1980:51). Labov & Waletzky, for example, describe "Abstract, Orientation, Complicating Action, Evaluation, Result, and Coda" as elements of a narrative (Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). However, this very strict structure applicable to more extensive texts and is not usually found in everyday conversations or media content. Since the PaCE project is about the analysis of narrative practices in everyday social life, we follow Prince's (1973) structuring. Accordingly, a narrative has an initial state, an event that changes the initial state, and a final state that differs from the initial state (Müller 2018: 2). Political arguments are not limited to the description of a desired end state, but are also about offering or showing a solution to current problems.



Combining this with Somer's (1994) causal emplotment as the linkage of events, we therefore count three narrative elements described as orientation, complication and resolution.

In addition to the events and their linkage, another characteristic of narratives is the presence of actors who make the story complete (Shen, Ahern & Baker 2014: 100; Lück, Wessler, Wozniak & Vycario 2018: 5). "Mitreißende Charaktere [rousing characters]" (Gadinger et al 2014: 12) are points of identification for the recipient that involve him or herself in the story. Patterson & Monroe (1998) refer to this as "agency." „When narrative emphasizes human action that is directed toward goals, it provides insight on how different people organize, process, and interpret information and how they move toward achieving their goals.” (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 316). However, the actors in narratives do not necessarily have to be active themselves. They can also be portrayed as powerless. „[S]ome making conscious and consequential choices, with others being powerless in the face of events“ (Boswell 2013: 623). The actors in narratives can thus take on different roles. At the beginning of narrative research, Propp (2002) analysed Russian fairy tales and found a group of characters appearing repeatedly. It was the "villain, donor, helper, princess and her father, dispatcher and hero" (Hyvärinen 2007: 451). Certain narratives thus seem to have a recurring - stereotyped - catalogue of characters (Boswell 2013: 623). In the case of the narratives examined here, it is conclusive to assume, for example, that based on the working definitions, that the catalogue of characters in populist and nativist narratives includes a villain, as well as a victim. The use of well-known actor roles also seems to be a factor in the success of narratives. If one identifies with an actor in a narrative, a "psychological transportation" takes place (Braddock & Horgan 2016: 384). This leads to being drawn into the story and not looking at it too critically.

Narrative structures are, of course, not an end unto themselves. As mentioned at the beginning, the expression of ideas in narrative form serve a specific purpose. The links between events and actors are constructed in order to explain something, to give meaning to something, and to provide an interpretation. Thus, at the centre of a narrative, there is always a specific problem (Patterson & Monroe 1998: 324). In fairy tales the princess must be saved, in populism the rule of the people must be restored, and in nativism there is a struggle for the purity and immutability of the "natives." In the context of the PaCE project, we use the phrase "object of contention" for this central theme. This can be addressed directly in the narrative, or it can be accessed through the analysis of the individual narrative elements and their links.

To summarise; narratives thus contain at least two events, which are initially connected with each other chronologically. Furthermore, they are causally linked to each other. This link describes an initial state (orientation) and an event that changes the initial state (complication), which leads to a final state that differs from the initial state. The entire narrative revolves around an object of contention for which a solution (or resolution) is offered. Also part of the narrative, are actors who are antagonistically opposed and can be assigned to stereotypical roles. Accordingly, we chose the following working definition of narratives: Narratives are patterns of interpretations assigning social actors to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot revolving around an object of contention. This definition draws on the work of Braddock & Dillard (2016), Hinyard & Kreuter (2007), Braddock & Horgan (2016), Labov & Waletzky (1967), Patterson & Monroe (1998), Prince (1980), Propp (1928), Somers (1994).



3. Computational analysis

3.1 Dictionary construction

In a second step, we applied the above-mentioned definitions to identify populist narratives (as well as nativist and liberal democratic narratives) in public media. PaCE decided to use CommonCrawl as its main data source when searching for narratives online. CommonCrawl is a non-profit organization in the US that crawls the web and freely provides its archives and datasets to the public on Amazon S3. Common Crawl's web archive consists of petabytes of data collected since 2011. This includes any kind of website on the internet, like blogs, comments, etc., but not Social Media. To search and extract relevant content from CommonCrawl data we constructed separate dictionaries (i.e. keywords list) based on the definitions for each ideological concept. The populism dictionary draws on existing German (Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011; Pauwels 2017; Gründl 2019) and English (Pauwels 2011; Rooduijn & Pauwels 2011; Bonikowski & Gidron 2016a; Bonikowski & Gidron 2016b) dictionaries as well as an inductive search of social media data resulting in additional keywords. Our dictionary mostly includes single words but also incorporates a few frequently used phrases and word combinations. Keywords were each assigned to a specific communicative dimension that corresponds with the narrative structure: A description or action of the elites, the description of the general will or a description or action of the people.

The aforementioned existing populism dictionaries also included nativist keywords to detect right-wing populism. For reasons of conceptual clarity, we excluded these from the populist dictionary and used them for a separate nativist keyword list. Furthermore, words specifically indicating a nativist ideology were added based on literature and social media searches. Words were included that either describe the natives or communicate actions of the natives, describe the homeland or describe the non-natives or an action of the non-natives. The liberal democracy dictionary is based on a literature review (e.g. Maerz & Schneider 2019) and an inductive social media search since there were no pre-existing dictionaries. The keywords are also based on two dimensions: the description of liberal democracy as in institutional manifestations or liberal political culture. Using three different existing data sets of media and social media content, we ran a database supported keyword search to detect frequencies of our populist keywords starting in M4. Since the mentioned existing dictionaries vary in validation strategies and performance indicators, we used two manually coded datasets ($N_{\text{eng}} = 3,190$; $N_{\text{ger}} = 5,190$) provided by the NCCR democracy project (Wirth et al. 2016) to validate the test dictionaries by first comparing their performance to human coding. The datasets include various types of documents like media texts, press releases, party manifestos, Facebook and Twitter posts between 1994 and 2017. They were coded according to a populism definition similar to ours. We ran a database supported keyword search with MySQL to count keyword hits from our dictionary in every document. We then applied different measures and indicators originating in informatics and computer linguistics: Based on a confusion matrix (Table 1 and 2) that shows true positives, false positives, true negatives and false negatives, we calculated measures including precision, recall, F1 as well as various keyword hit rates to evaluate the dictionaries (Ting 2017; Perry et al. 1955; Manning et al. 2009; Fawcett 2006; Powers 2007).

English populism dictionary: confusion matrix and evaluation measures					
	total population	true condition		Prev 0.17	Acc 0.27
		condition positive 555	condition negative 2635		
predicted condition	predicted condition positive	true positives 541	false positives 2301	PPV 0.19	FDR 0.81
	predicted condition negative	false negatives 14	true negatives 334	FOR 0.04	NPV 0.96
		TPR 0.97	FPR 0.87		F1 0.32
		FNR 0.03	TNR 0.13		B 0.1

Table 1: Confusion matrix for the English populism dictionary

German populism dictionary: confusion matrix and evaluation measures					
	total population	true condition		Prev 0.13	Acc 0.58
		condition positive 681	condition negative 4509		
predicted condition	predicted condition positive	true positives 442	false positives 1958	PPV 0.18	FDR 0.82
	predicted condition negative	false negatives 239	true negatives 2551	FOR 0.09	NPV 0.91
		TPR 0.65	FPR 0.43		F1 0.29
		FNR 0.35	TNR 0.57		B 0.21

Table 2: Confusion matrix for the German populism dictionary

A confusion matrix shows the frequency of false and correct classification within the entire data set (total population, consisting of either the condition positive, $n=555$ in table 1, and condition negative, $n=2635$ in table 1). It is distinguished between true condition (populist content in the data) and predicted condition (populist keyword hits in the data). True positives indicate the amount of correctly classified cases of all positive cases by the dictionary (at least one keyword hit), while the measure for false positives indicates how many negative cases were falsely classified as positives (populism). Our English populism dictionary correctly classified 541 out of 555 cases as populist, while falsely classifying 2301 out of 2635 negative cases as positive (at least one populist keyword in non-populist content). To help interpret these measures and to assess the performance of the dictionary, different values are used, which vary in importance according to the goal of the analysis. In this case, the most important task for the dictionaries was to detect most of the populist content while leaving out non-populist cases. The recall measure (or true positive rate, TPR) shows the sensitivity of the dictionary and reflects the ratio of true positives out of all positives. The English populism dictionary has a high sensitivity ($TPR \approx 0.97$), which means it detected almost all populist content (see table 1). The German populism dictionary had a TPR of 0.65, which is also acceptable (see table 2). While the false positive rate (FPR) is relatively high for the English dictionary, the TPR is more important for the desired performance, aiming at getting most of the populist content. The next important indication of performance is the positive predictive value (PPV) or precision value. It is calculated by dividing the true positives by the predicted condition positive. In both cases, it is quite low and shows that the dictionaries “find” more irrelevant than relevant (populist) cases and there is room for improvement.

In a next step, we aimed at improving the dictionary mainly based on these measures. The main goal was to improve the FPR. We looked at the measures for each single keyword in the dictionary. Based on these single measures, we calculated different scenarios by eliminating keywords with poor values. This led us to a dictionary including much fewer keywords, and only those with a precision value over 0.5. This promised the best possible results when applying the dictionary. Although this is the way we chose to improve the dictionary, many different approaches are also possible with this kind of experimental data retrieval procedure.

To see how well the nativist keyword list is able to detect nativism, we used a dataset (provided by Johann Gründl, University of Vienna) from a non-nativist party (die LINKE) and a nativist party (AfD) with Facebook and Twitter data (see table 3). We calculated the ratio (single keyword count / total amount of posts per party) to account for the keyword frequencies in assumingly nativist and non-nativist communication. A high difference between the ratios (AfD ratio – LINKE ratio) indicated that the keyword is more prominent in nativist communication. Based on the results, we also calculated recall and precision values for each keyword.

Facebook & Twitter data								
Keyword	Total count	Die LINKE (n=53.792)		AfD (n=25.091)		Ratio difference	Precision in %	Recall in %
		count	ratio	count	ratio			
Migrant	913	129	0,24	784	3,12	2,88	85,87	3,12

Table 3: Example of keyword performance evaluation

The keywords that were distributed in both nativist and non-nativist communication were eliminated from the final dictionary.

Since there was no dataset at our disposal to validate the liberal democracy dictionary, we could not evaluate its performance, which is normally a crucial step for data retrieval. We still decided to use the liberal democracy dictionary, keeping in mind that it might not yield satisfactory or suitable results.

3.2 Keyword search in CommonCrawl database

The resulting populist, nativist and liberal democracy dictionaries were used in the keyword search by contribution of the Citizens Foundation (CF).

To find relevant populist content in the CommonCrawl database (data from the month of June 2019) with the 500.000 highest ranked websites stored in ElasticSearch, we used the results from the dictionary validation to create separate lists for an optimized search procedure. We then ran two separate searches for each list, limiting the database to English language websites with domain endings like .org, .com, .co.uk and eliminating country-specific domains.

We decided to use two lists for populist and nativist keywords each, and one list for liberal keywords (five in total). To reduce as many false positives as possible, one populist and one nativist list contained only keywords with a precision value of over 50 percent in the test data, as mentioned in the previous chapter. All paragraphs with at least one of these keywords were retrieved, resulting in 1,213,702 paragraphs. We wanted to make sure also to retrieve shorter paragraphs, which is why we did not limit the retrieval to paragraphs with at least three keywords. The other populism keyword list contained all of the validated keywords. The combination of more



than one keyword might yield more relevant results and not too much data or false positives. Therefore, for this search, the recovered paragraph had to contain at least three keywords from the second list, resulting in 15,601,680 paragraphs. The same procedure was carried out with two lists with nativist keywords, resulting in 6,959,620 paragraphs with at least one high precision keyword and 10,383,058 paragraphs with at least three total keywords. The search for potential liberal democracy-related content was carried out with one list, since evaluation measures were not available.

The search for paragraphs with at least one liberal democracy keyword resulted in 17,235,947 hits. After looking through some of the liberal democratic keyword paragraphs, it became clear that it is not possible to find these types of narratives in our material. The PaCE consortium decided to terminate the liberal narrative analysis for the following reasons: First, liberalism can act as a counter-narrative to populist narratives, which is why we wanted to focus on the search in the first place. However, as it turns out, the concept of liberal democracy is rhetorically complicated and not possible to operationalize with keyword indicators within our capabilities, possibly because it incorporates very commonly used phrases in other contexts. Our retrieved data from the CommonCrawl search did not return any suitable results for coding and we did not find any narratives even in the paragraphs with many keyword hits. Alternatively, we will still construct counter narratives as planned, but after we complete the populist and nativist narrative typology and also using results from all completed democracy labs in the PaCE project, drawing on the work of our project partners.

4. Operationalisation of populist and nativist narratives for content analysis

The keyword search content found this way was subjected to a qualitative content analysis. Main goal of the analysis is to first identify and extract populist, nativist and liberal democracy content in the data retrieved by the keyword search in Common Crawl data and then find narratives in these paragraphs.

Based on the previously established definition of narratives, an operationalisation was developed that makes it possible to locate (i.e. code) narratives in any kind of media content. Generally speaking, a narrative can be identified when at least **two actors** (characters within the story) and at least **two events** can be found in a text, which are narratively connected in the sense of a **plot** ("emplotment") (Somers, 1994). The actors are usually assigned to stereotypical roles like the hero, villain, accomplice or victim.

The operationalisation aims at developing indicators that help to extract narratives from any kind of text. The indicators need to be carefully selected and explained to avoid unclear coding and therefore extraction of narrative material. This is why the following description of narrative elements is very narrow, to leave as little room for interpretation for the coder as possible.

The actors in populist and nativist narratives

The two (or more) actors in the narrative take on different roles similar to the plot in a story. Therefore, in narratives, there is always a protagonist (the "good guy") and an antagonist (the "bad guy"). In populist narratives, the antagonistic actor is usually a member of a specified political, governmental, or economic elite while the protagonists are the people or the populist (party).

The enunciation of the actors can be more concrete or rather vague. As a specific example, „Merkel“ (Chancellor Angela Merkel) frequently functions as a *pars pro toto* for Germany's political leadership – the political elite. Expressions like "those up there" or simply "them" (while semantically opposing a „we“) in the statement, rank at the more diffuse end of possible elite addressees. In order for these expressions to be counted as actors in a populist narrative, it has to be apparent from the context that it refers to a (powerful, privileged) elite. The narrative counterpart of the antagonist is the protagonist. In the case of populist narratives, the protagonist is placed within the group of „the people“, and never the elite. In populist communication, “the people” are pitted against the elite and are thus an important part of a populist narrative. Synonymously used terms could be „the ordinary man“, „citizens“, „the taxpayers“, or simply „we“. Since these narratives ideationally aim at a certain societal group, it is important that the recipients are addressed and included. In the actual coding procedure, the respective designation of the narrative's actors is noted.

In nativist narratives, „the native“ is the protagonist (“the good guy”). In nativist ideology, natives are people who were born in a particular geographic region and whose ancestors have supposedly always lived there. From this a claim is derived for the natives to have priority entitlement to the resources available. The antagonist in a nativist narrative is the „non-native“ – usually people who have immigrated or have an immigrant background. To illustrate, current nativist narratives often tell the story of immigrants coming or being brought into the



country and benefiting from things that should really only be available to natives because the latter (or their ancestors) have worked hard for them. Immigrants on welfare, for example, are the antagonists here, living at the expense of the natives.

Stereotypical roles in populist and nativist narratives

Beyond the description as good or bad, specific stereotypical roles are ascribed to the actors within a narrative. The antagonist in a narrative can take the role of a villain or an accomplice of the villain. A villain is one who is active and acts himself (e.g. cheats, lies, betrays). In contrast, the accomplice appears more passive - e.g., he helps the villain to implement a plan (e.g., within a conspiracy) or is used or advanced by the villain for this purpose ("scapegoat"). In populist narratives, for example, the "sheeple" who run after the "old parties" (elite) and thus keep them in power can be accomplices (of the "old parties"), or the "criminal foreigners" who are brought into the country by "treacherous elites" in order to destabilize the state, can be accomplice of the villain. In case of a "good guy", the actor can take the role of a hero or a victim. In populist narratives, for example, a hero may be the one who liberates the people from the deceitful elite. On the other hand, the good guy in the narrative can also be a victim (e.g., the ordinary man), who is basically good but has been lied to and deceived through no fault of his own. Being a hero means being active. A victim, on the other hand, is more passive – it does not become a victim through own actions. In nativist narratives, the villain could be a politician who opens the borders for immigrants in order to destabilize the country. The accomplice could be refugee aides who help the villain to bring non-natives into the country. The natives or the locals are the victims in this case, because they are deprived of their resources. Usually, a specific political party or group of people appears to be the hero, for example, by closing the borders or by deporting the immigrants and thus restoring the purity of the natives. It is crucial to include the descriptions of the actors in the coding process for the analysis to be thorough. Thus, the hero can be sincere or indomitable, the victim innocent, the villain deceitful, and the accomplice mendacious. Up to five descriptive words can be coded for each actor. It is important to note that only descriptions specifically mentioned in the text and essential to the narrative may be coded. In addition to tangible mentions such as "honest," derivations are also allowed to be coded. Thus, from "setting our people finally free" it can be concluded that "the people" are describable as "unfree". Additionally, from the statement "giving back the power to the people", it can be concluded that the "people" here can be currently described as "powerless". In analysing these various characteristics of the actors in a narrative, it is possible to determine which actors typically appear in a populist or nativist narrative.

Besides placing different actors in the plot of a narrative, it links at least two more or less concrete events, points in time, temporal conditions or states with each other. For the content analysis, up to four events can be coded if they are linked together in the narrative. The events can be very distinct like "the peaceful revolution 1989", "end of World War II", an accident, or the signing of a contract. In contrast, events can also be more abstractly addressed in phrases like "in former times" or "in the future". Thus, more vague statements such as "centuries ago" or "now we fight" can also be coded as events. The crucial point is, that a more or less concrete temporal reference can be identified. "The last years" is no such concrete time statement since it has no reference point, but addresses a progression. "Years ago," on the other hand, can be a concrete temporal reference in a narrative because it addresses a reasonably concrete temporal point in the past. It is important that a progression or chronology is evident in connection of events. Thus, an "in former times" or "the last years" is relevant to coding only if a "today" and/or an "in the future" is associated with it, although the "in former times," "today," or the "in the future" may also appear implicitly. "Soon we will have freed ourselves from Soros' tyranny"



presupposes a today under Soros' tyranny and a future in which this is not so. "In the past, women could walk the streets in the evening without being bothered" implies that they can no longer do so today.

Within a narrative actors and events are logically and causally related to each other in a plot with a general theme or object of contention. This is what Somers means by "causal emplotment" (Somers 1994: 616-617). Elements of the plot are a starting point or orientation, a complication and a resolution. For a narrative to be complete, a text must contain at least two of the three plot elements. The starting point or orientation can be a concrete point in time, but also a more ideational state. Usually the orientation is a desirable state ("rule of the people", "freedom") or a desirable period of time ("in former times", "in the golden twenties", "after WW II"). It can also be exactly the opposite in that it is a state of affairs that is not desirable ("today the people are deprived of their rule") or a period of time that is not desirable ("since 2015 Germany has been flooded with foreigners"). Incidentally, the present can also be an orientation ("today we live in insecurity"). Overall, a starting point or orientation does not have to be concretely locatable in time. It can also be a more ideational state (e.g. political sovereignty, security). The narrative usually incorporates the threat to this initial state. In the case of a negative narrative beginning or orientation point, the narrative includes how this can be changed. This change is brought about by an event or action in the sense of a complication – the second element of a plot. Within a populist narrative an example of an action in the sense of a complication, is the establishment of the European Union, which is said to have resulted in individual states losing their political sovereignty. In case of a nativist narrative, a frequently invoked complication is the opening of the borders by the German government under Chancellor Merkel, which lead to an influx of non-natives at the expense of the locals. In both cases, the narrative is that these actions (or events) destroyed or reversed a state of affairs (orientation) that was portrayed as positive or even ideal. The third element of a plot describes a possible solution (i.e., resolution) to the complication, the return to the (positive) initial state, or the path to a (positive) state in the future. In a populist narrative, the solution offered could be, for example, to use direct democratic procedures to restore the lost sovereignty of the people or to vote for a specific party who claims to embody the will of the people.

To make the operationalisation a bit clearer, here is an example from the original data of the content analysis (CommonCrawl data).

“The globalist establishment has been at war against the people for decades. Centuries of scheming produced the EU centralization monster. The overwhelming deceit and destruction caused by the ruling class has finally received a setback in a plebiscite on the European Union. The New World Order of collectivists born in satanic ideologies, implemented by international finance, imposed through the carnage of continuous wars and administered under an abusive bureaucracy system of non-elected technocratic elites has suffered the repudiation of British men and women, who want to restore England to a sovereign nation under the principles of Magna Carta.”

The "globalist establishment", the "ruling class", the "collectivists" of the New World Order (NWO) and the "non-elected technocratic elites" are one actor with different names - a diffuse ruling global conspiratorial technocratic elite (A1) who is "at war against the people". Thus, this elite is opposed to "the people" (A2). Accomplice of the elite is "international finance" (A3) which "implemented" the NWO for the elite. Furthermore, there are "British men and women" as actors (A4). These are basically identical with "the people", but more specific and in a different role. Unlike "the people" in general, who are victims of the elite's war, the "British men and women" inflicted defeat on the elite in a plebiscite and are therefore heroes. A1 and A3 are the

bad guys in the story. A2 and A4 are the good guys. A1 is the villain, A3 his accomplice. A2 is the victim and A4 is the hero. The diffuse elite as the villain is "scheming", "deceitful" and "destructive". There is no description of the other actors. The starting point is the monster of EU centralization created by the elite. The complication is that the elite has suffered a setback in a referendum and the solution in terms of a future prospect is for England to become a sovereign nation again due to the action of the British men and women.

Figure 1 shows a complete (fictional) populist narrative with three actors, three events composed in a plot with an orientation, a complication and a resolution. Once (t1) the political power lay with the people (A1), but it was stolen from them (complication) by the state functional elite (A2). Now (t2) the people are robbed of their sovereignty (orientation), but it will be restored in the future (t3) by introducing direct-democratic procedures (resolution) by an unspecified "we" (A3). The object of contention in this narrative is political power or sovereignty.

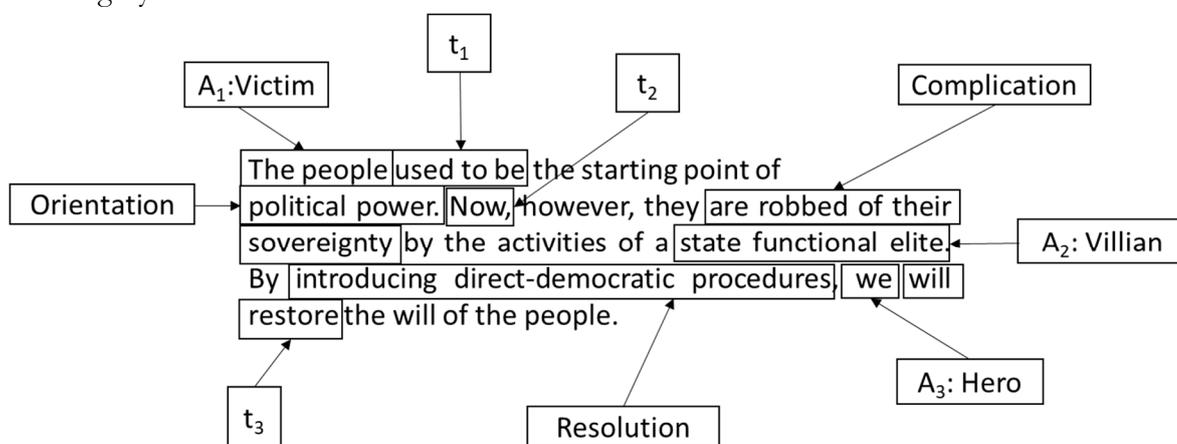


Figure 2: Scheme of a populist narrative

5. First results for a narrative typology

Although the keywords were validated, the results from the dictionary search still needed to be examined closely with respect to populist and nativist content first, before searching for narratives. Many keyword hits does not mean that populist or nativist content is actually included. This is why a manual content analysis is necessary. To increase the likelihood of the identification of populist and nativist content and thus, narratives, we started coding the paragraphs with the highest total number of keywords for each keyword list. In total, 1000 paragraphs each with populist and nativist keywords have been manually coded successfully.

Populist Narrative Types

Out of these 1000 paragraphs containing populist keywords, 162 paragraphs actually contained populist content (16%) and 43 narratives were identified in the populist content (26%). Using an inductive content analysis method, we developed a category system to order the narratives according to their features.

Most paragraphs use the antagonism of a villainous elite and a victimized people as the central part of the narrative (as expected). However, they do not make use of the narrative role of a hero (e.g. a populist party or politician) which intervenes. The pessimistic metanarrative – a superordinate narrative – uses the past as orientation while the present contains a serious societal, economic or political complication. Since an explicit or implicit mention of a resolution located in the future is missing, the meta-narrative is described as pessimistic.



In some cases, at least a vague resolution can be identified:

“The political establishment, in conspiracy with the media, is eroding democracy and the people should unite to defend it.”

Generally, populist narratives rhetorically construct the ‘people’ as clear victims of an elite, often with words like “powerless” or “oppressed”:

“Just like dictators in the cold war, seemingly progressive left rulers are still oppressing and massacring the people in the name of socialism and anti-imperialism.”

“Abuse of power has always been present in American history where the powerful elites dominate the powerless people undemocratically.”

The elite can take on various forms and is criticized for different actions. One of the themes involves the elite as dictators eroding democracy, as these examples of single narratives show:

“Robert Mueller is a hatchet man for the deep state oligarchy that runs the country, involved in ongoing fraud and crimes against democracy and the American people.”

“Democracy is at a turning point since the government has become dictatorial and is taking away the rights of the citizens.”

Another theme, which is more economically centred, discusses the rich as absorbing the people’s wealth. These narrators usually talk about big corporations that plunder the people:

“They plundered the country under the label of nationalization, after 1990 plundering continued under the label of privatization. They became rich and took everything from the people what they built in 40 years.”

“With the rise of giant corporations the power was taken away from the people by transnational corporations.”

Next to these themes, there are also temporal trajectories within the narratives that follow certain patters. One type of narratives uses the ‘heartland’ topos (Taggart 2000), where either an unspecified or a clear time in the past is exalted. The narrator uses the past as an orientation for societal decline in the present. In some cases, a resolution is demanded, like in these examples:

“A century ago the government protected common citizens from the power of corporations by legislations. Today corporations gain control over the government. People must recognize and correct this through a Constitutional Amendment.”

“Joining EU was a coup against democracy and people’s national identity done by the elites (old powers, old Lords & Ladies, establishment). People are waking up now and see what’s been done to them.”

While the previous temporal connection of events, actors and their relationship is more optimistic since it offers a resolution, the following type of narrative calls on constant misery. It also uses past events by comparison to the present, but states that the country or society has always been in a hopeless condition.

“The colonial forefathers claimed rule of the natives and the new Federal government continues the same capitalistic fascist theocracy with ongoing crimes against humanity.”

“Since the days of the Conquistadores, there has been ongoing brutal plundering of the people by the Bolivian oligarchy under elected governments.”

Overall, there were six types of narratives to be found (see Table 4). The object of contention is usually similar: erosion of democracy and loss of sovereignty. Here, the different types are made up by the usage of the role of the villain. While all of them victimize the people, the elite as the villain is not always the same group of agents:

Category	Type	Description
1	Restoration-orientated Narrative with political Elite	The narrative uses a political elite as the villain and incorporates a restoration or call to action to change the current situation.
2	Restoration-orientated Narrative with economic Elite	The narrative uses an economic elite as the villain and incorporates a restoration or call to action to change the current situation.
3	Declinism-orientated Narrative with political Elite	The narrative is pessimistic and does not incorporate any proposed change or future action. It uses a political elite as the villain.
4	Declinism-orientated Narrative with economic Elite	The narrative is pessimistic and does not incorporate any proposed change or future action. It uses an economic elite as the villain.
5	Elite Defamation Narrative	This narrative uses both an economic and political elite either separate or as one in the role of the villain.
6	Progressive Orientation Narrative	This narrative also has the elite in the central role of the villain, but has a more progressive orientation towards the future. It incorporates a recommendation for future actions, mostly by the people or a political party.

Table 4: Initial narrative typology

In conclusion, these first analyses point to a rather pessimistic populist meta-narrative and in general to a negative tone. This is in partially line with literature on populist communication, since the democratic system is seen as malfunctioning (De Vreese et al. 2018) and often in crisis (Engesser, Fawzi & Larsson 2017). Populist communication is often protest-orientated (Canovan 1999). This also explains the negative temporal trajectories, where either a glorified heartland (Taggart 2000) is now in decline, or the people have always been oppressed and live in constant misery. This reflects the previously mentioned “backward-looking stories” (Gadinger, Jarzelski & Yildiz 2014: 17). Populist narratives can be assigned to both right-wing or left-wing ideologies. In both cases, the people are seen as an imagined community (Mudde 2004). They are constructed as a passive victim (waiting to “wake up”) or be mobilized rather than taking the initiative themselves (Mudde 2004).

Analysis of additional populist content

The depicted results give a first impression of what types of populist narratives exist in the English-speaking part of the internet. Since the paragraphs retrieved by the CommonCrawl search, after a rigorous search optimization, only about four percent contained narratives. One problem of the CommonCrawl search procedure is that the paragraphs are shortened by the search algorithm, eliminating sentences that are more than 250 characters away from a populist keyword. This means that some of the retrieved texts are not complete because the keywords are spaced too far apart. Using whole texts would produce too much data: for this amount of data searched in the entire internet, paragraphs are the only way to retrieve potentially the most relevant



content. For populist content alone, this worked fairly well, but narratives are complex semantic structures and are not easily found by using the computational methods at our disposal, as the ratio of narratives in the total amount of data shows. Furthermore, CommonCrawl is missing Social Media content entirely, which are an important channel for populist communication (Engesser, Ernst et al. 2017). While the CommonCrawl search returned interesting results for an initial overview, we decided to draw on further material to conduct another content analysis to find relevant populist narratives.

To support our first findings, we resorted to the previously mentioned NCCR dataset (Wirth et al., 2016). Since it includes all kinds of media content like newspaper articles, social media posts, press releases and party manifestos from Germany and the UK, it reflects important political discussions which we did not have access to with the CommonCrawl dataset. As we mentioned before, the material is pre-coded (quantitative content analysis) for populism. We extracted only the populist content and trained three coders, which will be coding the entire dataset according our narrative codebook. The results from this procedure will be used to support and expand our existing populist narrative typology.

6. Conclusion

This report reflects the work done for WP3 and serves as the deliverable D3.1 for M1-24.

Based on an extensive literature review from different fields in communication science, linguistics, sociology, political science and psychology, we developed an extensive definition for populist, nativist and liberal democratic narratives. Building on these definitions, we developed five different dictionaries with an extensive validation process using methods from computational social science, informatics and computer linguistics to use in the CommonCrawl database for the extraction of relevant content for the subsequent content analysis. After the extracted media content from CommonCrawl was satisfactory, we developed an operationalisation and a codebook to code two thousand paragraphs according to populism and nativism. This resulted in an initial typology of populist narratives. We found one metanarrative and six sub-categories of populist narratives. Since the material from CommonCrawl lacks in certain aspects and did not return as many results as expected, we now turn to a new, pre-coded dataset to support our first typology. The coding has begun and will be finished in three months maximum. Meanwhile, the nativist typology is being developed, a decision whether it is satisfactory still needs to be made.

We are confident to complete T3.2 within the given time frame.



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