Populist Communication in Comparative Perspective

Ideology, Performance, Mediation

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
School of Media and Communication

May 2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My research was supported by two projects. The Media, Conflict and Democratisation (MeCoDEM)[1] project led to my discovery of the South African case study of the Economic Freedom Fighters and developed the Twitter analysis tool Mecodify. This research would have looked very different without my participation in that project. Thanks to everyone involved and a special thanks to the South African team and to Walid Al-Saqaf for always being at the end of an email or skype call to help with using, fixing and even developing new aspects of Mecodify. The Populist Political Communication in Europe COST Action[2] and all the many international scholars involved have been a source of inspiration for my thesis and work in general through ongoing conversations, training schools and related research projects, including an interview study that I draw on in this research.

ABSTRACT

In this study I investigate how populism can be understood and explained from a communication perspective. Most literature constructs a dichotomy between populist ideology and style. A communication perspective instead emphasises that ideological content and stylistic form are inseparable in populist performances of political representation. For this purpose I compare two populist parties: the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – a radical-left, explosive phenomenon in South African politics – and the UK Independence Party (UKIP), which paved the way for Brexit. These two cases have emerged from contrasting democratic contexts, yet both respond to fault lines in representative democracy and engage in similar practices of symbolic communication.

My approach offers a reconceptualization of populism as a communicative process. I achieve this by conducting an in-depth analysis of populist disruptive performances as exemplary manifestations of populist ideology and identifying their key features. A series of disruptive performances – live and virtual – initiated by UKIP and the EFF between 2014 and 2017 provide the inspiration. I approach the analysis through the theoretical concepts of ideology, performance and mediation and enquire into their interrelation in populist communicative processes. These processes are interrogated through a primarily interpretive analysis, supplemented by quantitative analysis, of a broad range of communicative resources sparked by the disruptive performances, including YouTube videos, press releases, legacy media and social media posts. Through this perspective I am able to enrich and deepen our understanding of current debates in the literature, explain populism's appeal in the hybrid media environment and explicate its characteristic mode of representation.

The thesis demonstrates that such a communication perspective explains the thinness of populist ideology, its harmony with processes of mediation and its varied forms around the globe. In combination with the comparative approach it reveals insights into the populist mode of political representation and its implications for democracy.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DA	Democratic Alliance
EFF	Economic Freedom Fighters
EP	European Parliament
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SONA	State of the Nation Address
UKIP	UK Independence Party

1. INTRODUCTION

Many populists would agree that the story of the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in South Africa is one of martyrdom and courage in the face of betrayal and deceit. The odds are stacked against these small opposition parties taking on the players of big and dirty politics in a universal battle between good and evil. This is a struggle that is playing out across the world. Through a visceral enactment of ordinary people's discontents and perceptions of politics, populists challenge the foundations of representative democracy. We have recently seen UKIP successfully campaign for the UK's extraction from the European Union. In the US Donald Trump has crossed to the other side of the television screen and is governing via tweets – a situation that some commentators see as proof that the US is in a crisis of democracy (Lanktree, 2018). Elections across Europe, from France and Germany to Poland and Italy, have witnessed populist parties threatening the national and international order. Examples are too many to mention. The Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) Norbert Hofer nearly won the presidency after a second round re-run, and the results of Hungary's parliamentary election in April 2018 were largely hailed as a victory for not only Fidesz leader Viktor Orbán but for right-wing populism in Europe more generally.

Yet as a new buzzword, 'populism' has also become overused. Tony Blair decries Jeremy Corbyn as a populist (Payton, 2016) and Vatican clerics make similar accusations against the reformist Pope Francis (Pepinster, 2018). This politicised and inflationary use of the term risks losing its analytical focus. While the recent rise of the phenomenon has triggered scholarly interest, uncertainty remains about what populism actually is due to its many forms and varied contents; and that prevents us from engaging with it in a rigorous manner. We are thereby also hampered in both acknowledging the points it makes and addressing the dangers it poses to representative democracy.

Populism's global rise highlights a fault line in representative democracy. Its success speaks of its resonance with ordinary people but also of populism's communicative abilities. When populists around the globe, in established as well as transitional democracies, are conjuring up images of the polarisation of elites and people, they are

not pure figments of the imagination. They are highlighting otherwise unvoiced – or unheard – calls for responsiveness, sincerity and morality in representative politics from a large part of the electorate that feels left behind. Yet, while they reflect very real disaffection, in re-presenting the voice of this "silent majority" (Canovan, 1999, p. 5), they also bring it into being. They give it presence and in doing so, configure its identity, however vaguely. They have an effect upon reality. This is a communicative process; and it is a captivating one that grabs the attention of those who feel otherwise alienated by formal politics. For the populist drama enacts democratic politics as many ordinary people perceive it: not as grand clashes of complex political ideologies but as a visceral struggle for rights, voice and legitimacy in relation to a distant political elite.

This communicative process often takes the form of disruptive acts that at once forcefully secure a voice in restrictive institutional contexts, engage the disengaged, and speak to a new media environment that reflects changes in the relationship between politics and the media. In very different contexts of established and transitional democracies, the changing terms of mediation in many ways place similar demands, opportunities and risks on the performance of political representation. Populists in both contexts take the opportunity to access power through new and more direct tools of communication and mediation. They take advantage of the vulnerability of elite representatives to the ubiquitous visibility that characterises the new media environment. This situation renders the elite's armour of authenticity dangerously fragile, which in turn nourishes a public sense of being inefficaciously represented. It is this climate in which populism currently flourishes. Populists engage with this process of political communication so fundamental to democratic representation in an ambiguous, unique and powerful way. The ways in which they do so is the subject of this research.

1.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The field of populism scholarship has for some time been grappling with both conceptual and empirical issues. It has proven difficult to define the slippery concept of populism in a way that acknowledges the many global varieties of the phenomenon and enables comparison yet remains conceptually meaningful. A preoccupation with

this fundamental definitional issue has also led to neglect of the essential connection between conceptual development and the empirical manifestation of the phenomenon. Where theorising has been tied to empirical research (which is not often enough), an assumption has been made that populist ideology can be identified in pure unadulterated form in, for instance, election manifestoes or, more recently, social media posts. The transformational processes of communication and mediation that populist ideology goes through – and through which, I suggest, populism at once exposes and deepens the fault lines of representative democracy – have not been addressed in sufficient detail.

To do so is my primary aim in this study. I therefore set out to answer the question,

1) **How can populism be understood and explained from a communication perspective?**

I posit that engaging with the processes of meaning-making inherent in communication resolves many of the initial conceptual issues of the definition and comparability of populism. In scholarship on populism (and often on political communication more generally) the concepts of ideology and style (or performance[3]) are usually portrayed as binaries. Ideology tends to be associated with substantive content and style with inconsequential and shallow form. I approach the question by dissolving this binary and integrating ideology and performance in a communication perspective that sees their influences upon each other as mutually constitutive, as ideology manifests itself through performance. To develop this perspective I draw an analogy between the process of meaning-making inherent in the relationship between populist ideology and performance on the one hand and the more abstract notions of form and content on the other. I thereby approach populist communication from a perspective on meaning-making that goes beyond the low-level definitions usually used in scholarship on populism. This enables me to approach populism as a process and to overcome the problems usually encountered in applying a coherent conceptual framework to empirical instances of populist communication. Yet I keep the two concepts of populist ideology and performance analytically distinct and therefore

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[3] In the following I, like Moffitt (2016), make a rough equation between political style and performance.

break down the above research question into the following two subquestions relating to each of these concepts:

2) How is populist ideology constructed through communicative processes?
3) How does disruptive performance communicatively manifest a populist mode of representation?

I conceive of populist ideology as having a relational nature, where the relations between its core concepts of the people, the elite, the populist and sovereignty are established communicatively. I then approach the notion of disruptive performance as a paradigmatic manifestation of populist ideology. Moreover, I posit that the nature of the relations between populism's constituent components take the form of a particular mode of representation, which populists perform most explicitly through disruptive performance.

An aim of this research is therefore to identify a populist mode of representation. Such a project involves a recognition of how populists envision representation, and therefore also of how they conceive of the roles of ideology and performance in politics. I allow the populists to speak. But I then move on to interrogate how they do so and what the implications are for democratic politics. In approaching this task, I draw upon Ankersmit's astute observation that "one of the peculiarities of the reality we are living in is that apparently style sometimes generates content, and vice versa" (2002, p. 135). Ankersmit suggests that in our concern with political style we should focus on the interaction between political actors, rather than on the actors themselves (ibid., p. 134). From this perspective, engagement with style as well as ideological content is therefore essential to address the issues we face in processes of political representation today as these concern the nature of the interaction between political representatives and citizens. The current dichotomy between ideology and style in the populism literature is unhelpful for this purpose. As Ankersmit posits, on the one hand,

>…conceptually the distinction between content and form can be maintained with all the clarity desired. On the other hand, we can truly make the empirical observation that style and content sometimes

merge into each other when we apply these two notions to certain aspects of reality (ibid., p. 135).

Although I keep style (or performance) conceptually distinct from content (or ideology) for analytical reasons, I therefore empirically investigate how they interact in populist modes of representation.

In representative democracies such a mode of representation is necessarily mediated. The process of mediation forms an integral part of the meaning-making process of communicating populism. In breaking down my research question I therefore also consider how populist communication anticipates and harmonises with such processes of mediation:

4) How does populist communication harmonise with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment?

Studies of populism's relationship to the media tend to argue for a congruity between populist styles of communication and the characteristics of both social media and legacy media, especially tabloid formats. The exact nature of this harmony has not yet been explicated in the literature. Neither has it been explored across different media types in the hybrid media system. Most empirical study tends to be undertaken in silos of new versus legacy media with little recognition of the processes of mediation within and across the media ecology. Yet the media is an essential element in understanding the modern nature of representative democracy and populism's role in it. I therefore seek to deepen our understanding of this relationship between the media, populism and representative democracy and to do so in a manner that recognises the hybrid nature of the media ecology.

In this respect a comparative angle is important. Populism is often explained as a product of the current media environment in Western democracies (see, for example, Aalberg et al., 2016), but it is also argued to emerge through the process of democratisation in transitional democracies. In South Africa, for instance, Vincent (2011) explains it as a product of a period of elitism coupled with a lack of democratic education of the people in the consolidation process. In both cases populism is conceived as a product of the current state of democracy in the given context. Yet

these states are entirely different, and we are witnessing parallel developments in populist responses to their given democratic environments. Comparing the two must tell us something important, missing from extant research, about populism's relationship to democracy, both in terms of the way populism comes about in a given context and the ways in which it influences that context and its future democratic trajectory. I therefore also aim to explore the role of context in the ways in which populism plays out.

Populism adopts many different forms and contents around the world. While this indeed suggests that context is important to the ways in which it is constituted and manifests itself, these contextual differences raise the question of how to compare. I suggest that a communication perspective on populism that considers populism as a process resolves this issue. Where both populist content and the form it adopts may differ across cases, the *processes* of manifesting that content in communicative and representational practices are comparable. Such comparisons in turn enable me to consider the implications of a populist mode of representation for representative democracy in different democratic environments. I therefore ask a final question that cuts across the specific lenses upon populist communication informed by the concepts of ideology, performance and mediation:

5) How does the comparison across different democratic contexts add to our understanding of populist communication?

While this comparative perspective fills a gap in the literature on populism where very limited work has been done, its focus on process also gets to the heart of populist political communication.

Finally, many of the questions outlined above are challenging to study empirically within existing methodological frameworks. An essential assumption underpinning this study is that the conceptual framework that forms its starting point must inform the methods of study and that the empirical results will deepen existing theory. A further aim is therefore to develop a method that enables this dialogue between theory and empirical study. In order to address the above questions, such a method must be able to engage with both content and form and the process of mutual transformation that

they engage in. It needs to recognise the meaning communicated by populist actors but also the ways in which they communicate. It should address mixed forms of data resulting from a variety of modes of mediation as well as their interrelation in the media ecology. And it must be able to systematically account for a variety of contextual factors and to recognise the contextuality of concepts in order to allow comparison of cases of populism across different democratic contexts.

1.2 DEFINITION OF POPULISM

Having established the research questions and aims of the study, I move on to consider the definition of populism. This is an as yet unresolved and disputed matter in the literature. At this point I do not immerse myself in details of definitions but rather aim to establish a basic understanding that can form the foundation for further conceptual insights as the study progresses. We will see in chapter two that we can approach populism as an ideology from a communication perspective. Let us for now consider the essential elements of a definition of populism around which there is broad consensus in the literature:

- The people as an empty signifier (Blassnig, forthcoming; Laclau, 2005a), but usually in the senses of the common people, peoples as nations, and, especially, the people as sovereign (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 501; Wirth et al., 2016).
- The elite as immoral and opposed to the people (Aalberg et al., 2016; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Mudde, 2007; Stanley, 2008) and as defined on the basis of political power, economic power, supranational rather than national interests, and/or ethnicity (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, pp. 502–4).
- The populist as one of the people (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Canovan, 2005; Taggart, 2000) and as able to restore sovereignty to the people (Abts and Rummens, 2007; Wirth et al., 2016) and divine the general will (Canovan, 2005; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013).
- The sovereignty of the people (Abts and Rummens, 2007; Norris and Inglehart, 2018; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014; Wirth et al., 2016) as a normative goal of politics and obtainable through the enlightenment of the populist actor (Canovan, 2005).
- 'The others' as a threat to the people's sovereignty (Wirth et al., 2016), although this feature is often regarded as optional in the literature (see for example Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; De Cleen, 2017; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007).

Bar the last optional component, these are all essential features of populism. I first address this final optional element. Is 'the other', in addition to the elite, essential to populism? Perspectives that answer yes to this question tend to be informed by chiefly European and other cases of right-wing populism (for example, Akkerman, 2011; Mudde, 2007; Rooduijn, 2014; Wodak et al., 2013). Given populism's frequent appearance in combination with nationalism and nativism in these cases, the elements of populism easily become entangled with those of its host ideologies and with regional geopolitical concerns. In perspectives based on, for instance, the left-wing Latin American cases (for example, De la Torre, 2010; Waisbord, 2013), in contrast, 'the other' tends to be excluded from the definition of populism. The difficulty of definition is clearly exacerbated by the fact that most empirical studies are confined to such regional pockets and subtypes of populism. This specific focus of much recent scholarship, while enlightening as to certain types of populism, has to some extent entangled the concept with local cultural and political factors and with specific 'host ideologies'. I therefore follow De Cleen's (2017) view (see also e.g. Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Norris and Inglehart, 2018) that horizontal antagonism towards 'the other' can usefully be seen as a quality of nationalism, whereas populism is restricted to vertical antagonism between the elite and the people. While I therefore do not conceive of horizontal forms of othering as essential to the definition of populism, I recognise that they are frequent devices for a more effective manifestation of populist ideology. Moreover, by approaching populism from a broad, comparative perspective that seeks to encompass types of populism situated in different geographical regions, as responding to different democratic contexts, and in combination with different host ideologies, I hope to overcome some of these definitional complications empirically. I therefore also adopt a minimal definition of populism that is able to encompass such different cases.

Despite the focus on vertical antagonism, populism distinguishes itself from the broader notions of anti-elitism and anti-establishmentarianism by its homogenisation of the two antagonistic groups, the people and the elite, and by establishing the dichotomy on the basis of a moral claim (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 502). With core elements of populist ideology being a homogenous representation of the people as good and the elite as immoral, the starting point of an analysis is then a

definition of populism as anti-pluralist and illiberal (see also Pappas, 2014 for a definition of populism as "illiberal democracy"). To understand how this illiberalism plays out, an investigation into the ways in which the nature of the relationship between the elite and the people are configured in populist communication is essential. Such a relationship manifests itself in a claim to political representation that proposes a closer relationship between representatives and represented based on identification and disintermediation. Yet the literature largely glosses over this aspect of populism. This despite general agreement that populism is a response to a (real or constructed) crisis of representation (for example, Moffitt, 2016; Taggart, 2000). Indeed, the relevance of political representation has only very recently started gaining traction in studies of populism (Andreadis and Stavrakakis, 2017; Arditi, 2003; Caramani, 2015; Kriesi, 2014; Moffitt, 2016; Roberts, 2017, 2014) and remains insufficiently theorised and hardly linked to empirical analysis. In this research I suggest that populism offers a revision of the terms of political representation through the ways in which the key elements of populist ideology relate to each other and manifest themselves communicatively.

In the following, I adopt Wirth et al.'s (2016, p. 15) definition of populism as:

> …a thin ideology that considers − through a Manichean outlook − society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and it postulates unrestricted sovereignty of the people.

In addition, based on the above core features identified in the literature, I consider populists' identification with the people as an essential aspect of populism. This explicit inclusion of the populist actor in the definition highlights the importance of self-representation in the manifestation of populist ideology. The use of a minimal definition such as this enables the analytical separation of populism from its 'host ideology' and opens up the possibilities for 'most different' comparative studies of which there are few so far in the populism literature. Indeed, only a handful of interregional, comparative studies have been undertaken (De la Torre, 2014; Hadiz and Chryssogelos, 2017; Hawkins, 2010; Mazzoleni et al., 2003; Moffitt, 2016, 2012; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012; Taggart and Kaltwasser, 2015).

1.3 Choice of Cases and Their Contexts

The role of context has long since been identified as one of the main challenges in the conceptualisation of populism and understanding of how it plays out (Allcock et al., 1968; Ionescu and Gellner, 1969). Taggart (2000) famously coined the adjective "chameleonic" to denote the difficulties of pinning down a phenomenon that adapts so smoothly to its environment. Up until now scholarship on populism has been largely undertaken in regional silos. Studies on Latin American left-wing forms of populism in transitional democracies and Europe-centric right-wing forms in established democracies rarely exchange ideas or develop shared conceptual frameworks that can help us theorise the overall phenomenon or the differences in how it plays out in different contexts. In the past year the first two handbooks on populism have been published, and in their combined 58 chapter-length entries, not a single one addresses the issue of the comparative study of populism. There is at once a real dearth of comparative study and a real need for it to extricate local factors in the manifestation of populism worldwide and to explore the role that context plays in the process of populist communication.

There are a couple of exceptions in the literature. Two studies (Huber and Schimpf, 2015; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012) suggest that populism has different effects upon democracy in different conditions of democratic consolidation and depending on whether they are in government or opposition. None of these studies are concerned with communication but they give an indication that there are important differences to be explored. My choice of case studies is therefore first and foremost based on a curiosity about the similarities and differences as to the role of populist communication in established and transitional democracies. The scholarship on democratisation and political communication very rarely intersect. Yet the importance of populism in their respective contexts of study leads both bodies of literature to assume that it is a problem primarily peculiar to them. Are we in the West avoiding the recognition of the many similarities in case they should indicate a backwards trajectory towards a less consolidated liberal democracy? The results of the British EU referendum and the many electoral victories for populist parties across Europe in recent years should certainly give us food for thought. The role populism plays in

transitions to democracy can therefore also teach us something about Western society and forms of representative democracy and not only the other way around.

The two contexts I selected for comparison are the established democracy of the UK and the transitional democracy of South Africa. The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the UK and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) in South Africa are both influential opposition parties that have run long-term and ultimately successful campaigns to respectively extricate the UK from the European Union and unseat President Jacob Zuma. In these campaigns both parties claimed to work towards a goal of more responsive and responsible democratic representation; and both parties appealed to large constituencies who felt left behind the democratic process by elites. My selection of case studies was moreover inspired by the Media, Conflict and Democratisation (MeCoDEM) project, which looked at one of the events the EFF were involved in as a case study of a democratisation conflict in a transitional democracy. As I argue in more detail in chapter five, public perceptions of democracy and feelings of efficacy are essential to the role of populism in a given context, and I therefore briefly consider these in relation to each of the two cases.

South Africa's democratic institutions, while relatively stable, sit alongside a high level of popular disillusionment and elite cynicism (Herbert, 2012, p. 246). As a result, Freedom House's democracy rating is far higher than the equivalent perception by citizens (Afrobarometer, 2009, p. 10). This discrepancy between expert and citizen views of the state of democracy in South Africa constitutes an important fault line in its representative democracy. Citizen perceptions are closely connected to the meaning they attribute to democracy. Zuern (2012) argues that in South Africa, democracy in the minds of many is associated with liberation from colonial (and, in some cases, post-colonial) regimes. This argument sees democracy and socio-economic rights as mutually dependent and includes a psychological process of decolonisation and bringing African knowledge, initiative and authenticity to the forefront whilst getting rid of foreign domination. Bratton and Mattes (2001, p. 455) further demonstrate that the equation of democracy and socio-economic status is markedly determined by race. Given many South Africans' desire for "economic goods" over "political goods" (ibid.), Bratton and Mattes conclude that the attitude to democracy in South Africa is

instrumental – that is, a means to economic development and poverty alleviation – rather than an intrinsic appreciation of democracy as an end in and of itself. As Zuern (2012) also states, economic inequalities threaten to undermine the promises of political equality.

Though the ANC continues to win elections based on its image as the party of liberation, the popular protests that were instrumental in overthrowing the previous Apartheid regime have resumed. They are triggered by dissatisfaction with unresponsive local government, a perceived higher level of corruption than before the advent of democracy, and widespread problems with basic public service provision in a system with a dominant party that gives citizens no other real democratic choice. If there is a gulf between elite and citizen perceptions of the quality of democracy, and between the institutions that have been put in place and the desires of the public as to the role of those institutions, the EFF express a notion of democracy that sides clearly with that of the people. Their name in itself – Economic Freedom Fighters – gives an unequivocal signal that economic freedom is a moral necessity in a just society. It also suggests that they challenge the ANC's ownership of the liberation narrative. The word 'fighters' positions the EFF amidst the throng of public protests that brought about the regime change that ended Apartheid and are now sweeping the country once again, contributing to the interpretation of democracy as liberation.

The EFF have been surrounded by controversy from their inception, which resulted from Commander-in-Chief Julius Malema being expelled from the ANC's youth wing on the grounds of "sowing divisions" (Bosch, 2011). He was later convicted of hate speech (against white South Africans). Since their establishment in 2013, the EFF have become the second-largest opposition party, winning 6.4 percent (Electoral Commission South Africa, 2014) of the vote in the 2014 national elections and 8.2 percent in the municipal elections in 2016 (Electoral Commission South Africa, 2016). Malema has at times been hailed by the media as the next president of South Africa (BBC Newsnight, 2013), at others as its next dictator (News24, 2015a). The EFF's positioning in the South African transitional landscape reflects their populist ideology. They side clearly with the people and establish a strong sense of identification with the black majority through race and by, for instance, dressing as ordinary workers in overalls in contrast

to the formal apparel of the elite. They call for a 'second liberation' from the economic inequality that the new black elite has engendered through corruption and mismanagement. They thus draw legitimacy from a portrayal of the elite as immoral and unrepresentative of the people, comparing them to the Apartheid regime. This evocation of the elite simultaneously conflates black and white elites into a homogenous totality and pitches them in opposition to an equally homogenous black population who are being deprived of their sovereign rights and of proper representation. The EFF's populism and their accompanying disruptive performance have enabled them to gain a voice in the South African political system where other opposition parties have failed. It also comes with a less palatable side dish of racially based othering of the white minority in South Africa.

In the UK, UKIP's campaign to leave the European Union also called for accountability of public representatives. British public attitudes to membership of the European Union have waxed and waned since the UK joined the EEC in 1973 (Mortimore, 2016). However, the results of the EU referendum on 23 June 2016 came as a shock to most. Pressure exerted by the UK Independence Party (UKIP) is widely regarded as a key factor in the referendum coming about. The party's increased media coverage, a result of electoral success (Deacon and Wring, 2016), allowed it to put pressure on the Conservative government. While the British first-past-the-post electoral system disadvantages small parties like UKIP, elections for the European Parliament use proportional representation and allowed UKIP an unprecedented victory with 27.5 percent of the popular vote in 2014 (BBC News, 2014). UKIP's electoral success is in turn closely tied to Nigel Farage's leadership as he converted UKIP from a single-issue party focused on leaving the EU to a broader policy platform that included immigration as a key issue.

In the referendum campaign, Farage combined these issues in an argument centred on the notion of sovereignty, where control of Britain's borders should be determined nationally and not by a distant EU elite. Rowena Mason, political correspondent for *The Guardian*, identified these two very issues as chief factors in determining the outcome of the referendum in her analysis of the result: immigration and the loss of sovereignty to an aloof Brussels elite (Mason, 2016). Farage and former UKIP donor

Arron Banks were instrumental in the Leave campaign in the lead-up to the referendum. The Leave.eu campaign controversially ran alongside the official Vote Leave campaign with the two supposedly being irreconcilable but enabling Leave.eu to self-style as "the Bad Boys of Brexit" (Banks, 2016) and voice less palatable views that tapped into public prejudices on immigration and ultimately strengthened the joint cause of Leave. As Arron Banks (Banks, 2016, pp. xxvi–xxvii) himself put it,

> Knowing that the Conservatives would avoid talking about immigration, he [Nigel Farage] wanted us to put the issue at the forefront of our efforts. Our brief was to do what even he could not: be as provocative as required to put immigration at the top of our agenda… We were undoubtedly the 'bad boys' of the referendum campaign.

UKIP's populism played a significant role in the referendum campaign. The self-representation as political outsiders was one side of this, where they identified with ordinary people rather than the political elite. They portrayed the British political elite as a cartel that was in cahoots with Brussels and ignored the wishes of ordinary British people. The notion of the UK's independence from the EU was a quest for sovereignty for the British people in the form of national self-determination. Nigel Farage's speech to the European Parliament after the UK's EU referendum arguably constitutes the climax of his career so far. Indeed, he performed it in his last days as leader of UKIP, resigning a week later after supposedly having achieved his political ambitions. UKIP's vote share immediately witnessed a sharp drop.

1.4 OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This thesis takes these two case studies as its point of departure to investigate how populism can be understood and explained from a communication perspective. It proceeds as follows. In chapter two I outline the conceptual framework of the study. This chapter serves to connect and integrate the core concepts of ideology, performance and mediation into a coherent communication perspective that goes beyond low-level definitions. I first provide a brief literature review of populism and the mostly dichotomous debate on its classification as style or ideology, where I focus on populism's communicative abilities. I then engage with the theoretical link between

form and content as a mutually constitutive relationship in the process of representation. I draw a parallel between this link and the relationship between ideology and performance and thereby also between communicative and political processes of representation, which I conceive of as sharing a creative and constitutive function. A key argument running through this chapter is that context – both in terms of the particular democratic environment and the media setting – plays a significant role in this process of meaning-making as both constituted *by* and constitutive *of* populist representation.

In chapter three I detail the comparative research design and develop the mixed methods used in the empirical parts of the study. I give priority to an interpretive approach that I supplement with quantitative analysis. Through a broad range of communications by UKIP and the EFF – such as YouTube videos, press releases, newspaper columns and social media posts – I map a total of six hybrid mediated performances between July 2014 and April 2017. These populist performances are my main objects of analysis. I supplement my analysis of populists' communications with media coverage of the events and public conversations on Twitter about the events. I thereby seek to paint a rich picture of the contexts, meanings and means of construction of populist communication. In chapter four I describe the specific events that the EFF and UKIP engage in and that are the objects of analysis of this study.

The next six chapters (chapters five to ten) are structured around the three core concepts that together form my conceptual framework. Pairs of theoretical and empirical chapters are dedicated to each of the concepts of ideology, performance and mediation in turn. This structure progressively peels off layers of the populist process of communication, focusing first on its ideological function, then on how its ideological claim is performed and finally on how it is designed with the process of mediation in mind. Within each pair of chapters, I moreover distinguish between two aspects of the populist representative claim. I explore the two populist parties' claims at face value on, respectively, ideology, performance and mediation and their roles in representative democracy. The purpose of this part of the exercise is to allow the populists to speak and to explore how populists themselves envision the process of representation. Yet I also go beyond populists' projections at face value and consider

the communicative processes that underlie them: the performance of ideology aimed at mediation. In each pair of chapters I therefore also engage in an analysis of how the populist claims are constructed based on a gradual development of these concepts. With respect to ideology, I analyse the populist parties' claims *about* ideology *as* ideological. I approach their claims *about* performance *as* performances. And I consider their claims *about* the role of the media in politics in the context of *their own practices* in relation to processes of mediation. In the course of this analysis, I tease out a populist epistemology and discuss how it changes the foundation of representative politics. In more detail, my argument in these six theoretical and empirical chapters is as follows:

Chapters five and six are centred on populist ideology. In chapter five I conceptualise ideology in communicative terms from a constructivist perspective. I develop populist ideology as rooted in mass conceptions of democracy in a given local context, which helps to explain the diversity of populism. Yet I also conceive of ideology as constituting (an alternative) reality. In this respect I do not follow critical definitions of ideology but retain a neutral, non-pejorative understanding of the concept as a ubiquitous and necessary process of representation. Unlike an entirely structural notion of ideology, such as that employed by the canon that defines populism as an ideology, conceiving of populist ideology as constructed and as constitutive allows commonalities to emerge between very different types of populism. In chapter six I demonstrate these similarities in my case studies and draw out the different forms and contents that populist ideology adopts in different democratic contexts. I outline the two populist parties' conceptions of the concept of ideology and its role in representative democracy but also analyse these claims as ideological based on the conception of ideology in the preceding theoretical chapter. From this analysis I develop a model of the ideological cleavage that populism constructs in the political spectrum.

Chapters seven and eight query how populist ideology manifests itself empirically by shifting the conceptual focus onto the notion of political performance. In chapter seven I define performance according to a cultural pragmatics perspective that is concerned with both content and form in the process of meaning-making. I situate

political performance as closely related to its given context: its communicative practices are confined by context-specific forms of social power; they build on resources of existing background symbols fluctuating in collective memory; and they use these to constitute a given representation that in turn influences its democratic context. Such portrayals of political reality are based on the relational nature of populist ideology, which configures relations between representatives and the people. I therefore conceive them in aesthetic terms as a performance of a populist mode of representation. In this respect I argue that disruptive performance is a particularly paradigmatic manifestation of populist ideology due to its oppositional nature. In chapter eight I engage in an empirical analysis of populist disruptions of elite political rituals and norms. I explore populists' conceptions of political performance by elites and their role in democratic representation in the two different democratic contexts, and I analyse these claims as performances of representation in and of themselves.

In modern representative democracy, such performances of representation are aimed at a process of mediation. This in turn implies that populist disruptive performance involves a process and motive not entirely transparent to populist constituents. Chapters nine and ten introduce the concept of mediation. In chapter nine I suggest that a key ulterior motive is to negotiate the demands that the new media environment places upon political representatives. This requires a careful balancing act by the populist communicator. For the populist representative claim relies on imparting populist ideology through a communicative relationship with the people, yet anti-media populism is an inherent part of this claim. As we shall see, disruptive performance provides the solution to this dilemma in the form of a symbolic manifestation of populist ideology that simultaneously provides first-class camera fodder. In chapter ten I apply this argument to an empirical analysis of the two cases. Where the previous chapters were concerned with the populist representative claim as it is aimed at constituents, this chapter recognises that the performance of the claim is also aimed at a second audience: the media. It therefore queries how the performance of the populist representative claim anticipates the process of mediation so essential to establish and maintain the representative relationship. It also analyses the hybrid mediation of the performance of the populist representative claim, considering in

particular the role that social media plays in disruptive performance and the influence of processes of mediation upon the communication of populist ideology.

In the conclusion I return to the research questions that I outlined at the start of this introduction and address each in turn. I then draw on the preceding analysis to engage in a normative argument about the implications of populist communication for representative democracy in transitional and established democracies.

2. A COMMUNICATION APPROACH TO POLITICAL POPULISM:

REPRESENTATION AND THE UNITY OF FORM AND CONTENT

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Let us first consider populism as a set of mental constructs or concepts: disembodied thought bubbles. Imagine the inside of Nigel Farage's head. The bubbles float around in there; one is an idea of ordinary people, another of the immoral elite, a third of himself as normal. How do these ideas play out? First, they are relational (Wirth et al., 2016, p. 8). Each value or concept is shaped by its relationship to other values within Farage's head. Second, they take material form through processes of representation. As the concepts emerge from Farage's brain, back into the world that inspired them, they take the form of a word, 'us', a pointed finger, a pint of bitter held in his hand. In the course of this process of becoming associated with signifiers and embodied in symbols, they adopt form and adapt their meaning to the norms and conditions of the world they enter into. They are shaped by recipients' conceptual maps and assume meaning in *their* heads. They are also mediated. Words, gestures and other symbolic actions are captured in video clips and print, posted on Twitter, retweeted in modified or original form, cited in the press and contextualised, recirculated, or perhaps ignored. They are accepted, rejected or remoulded by a variety of audiences and constituents. This often problematic process of meaning-making occurs in a non-linear and rather messy fashion that involves encroaching agency and influences by media institutions, audiences, competing political representatives, even technologies, making it near-impossible to control.

When populism is conceived as an ideology in extant scholarship, it is always in the sense of a value system – the thought bubbles in Farage's head. Not everyone subscribes to this classification. Especially scholars whose focus is on populist political communication and its relationship to the media find it difficult to establish the link between thought bubbles and tangible objects of study such as media broadcasts, news ink and Twitter posts. Their alternative is to define populism according to its communicative outputs by classifying it as a style, performance or discourse. Yet many such approaches unsatisfactorily neglect populism's substantive ideational content –

its actual claims and their significant appeal to voters who are not mere victims of the guileful machinations of populist communication practices. In other words, such definitions often ignore that populism has a point.

To resolve this quandary, in this chapter I outline a broad conceptual framework for approaching populism from a communication perspective. I start by engaging with the concept of populism and its classification. I outline the foundations of an approach that considers populism from an ideological perspective but takes account of how ideological thought bubbles materialise in embodied symbolic action. I then go on to draw a parallel between the mutually constitutive relationship between populist ideology and performance on the one hand and form and content on the other. I consider the relationship between concepts and their signifiers and how the two come together through the process of representation. In this approach I argue that communicative representation is closely related to political representation. I outline an aesthetic perspective on political representation, whereby the making of representative claims is a creative process that, like language, involves meaning-making through a system of concepts and material forms. I then introduce the notion of representative claim-making as the performance of populist ideology. In particular, I consider the notion of disruptive performance as an emblematic manifestation of populist ideology since it establishes an antagonistic relationship between the elite and populist actors who embody the people. Yet I posit that we need to approach disruption not only as imparting meaning to an ideological claim but also as strategically addressing a variety of audiences. In other words, I argue that the analysis of populist communication should go beyond the identification of the ideological meaning that populists intend to signify to their constituents and should also consider how this meaning is constructed through symbolic action. I finally consider the external influences of the democratic and media settings upon the meaning-making process inherent in performing the populist representative claim in order to set the scene for the comparative study.

2.2.   POPULISM AS FORM VERSUS POPULISM AS CONTENT

In the field of political communication we often encounter an approach where notions such as political style and performance are viewed as mere form, as containers for

meaning that do not, in and of themselves, contribute to the meaning-making process. This view has contributed to the dualism between stylistic and ideological definitions of populism that dominates the field. In the following I attempt to overcome this dichotomous view of meaning-making. I consider how a communication approach that conceives of populist ideology and performance as interconnected and sees ideology materialise through performance might inform the classification of populism. I briefly review the ongoing debate in the literature on whether populism should be classified as an ideology or as a style or performance. I side with an ideological classification in order to account for populism's ideational content – the source of its performative 'script' (Alexander, 2004b, p. 530). But I also argue that we need to consider the process of communicating ideology by slightly refocusing the conceptualisation of that concept itself.

Despite a robust theoretical debate over recent years, the definitional issue surrounding populism remains disputed. Having said that, the debate now revolves chiefly around the choice of classifier – *ideology* (Abts and Rummens, 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Canovan, 1999; Fieschi and Heywood, 2006; Krämer, 2014; Mudde, 2007, 2004; Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013; Reinemann et al., 2016a; Stanley, 2008; Taggart, 2000), *style* (Block and Negrine, 2017; Bossetta, 2017; Ekström et al., forthcoming; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Moffitt, 2016; Norris and Inglehart, 2018), *discourse or discursive frame* (Aslanidis, 2016; e.g. Hawkins, 2010; Heinisch and Mazzoleni, 2017; Laclau, 2005a; Panizza, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2017), and so on – rather than the constituent elements of populism and their characteristics. For, as we saw in the introduction, most approaches largely hone in on the same core elements: populists portray *the people* as homogenous, identify *themselves* with the people, and pitch both in opposition to an unrepresentative *elite* and, in some cases, to a threatening *'other'.*

The chief outstanding question in the literature therefore is one of whether our chief concern ought to be the mindset of populism (its values and claims) or the way this meaning manifests itself (its style and form of discourse). However, does the focus of our enquiry really necessitate and justify this dichotomy between ideology and style? From a communication perspective these two dimensions are mutually constitutive

and equally significant in processes of meaning-making. Acknowledging this complexity has recently led some scholars to conclude that populism is *both* an ideology and a style (Bracciale and Martella, 2017; Ekström et al., forthcoming; Engesser et al., 2017; Reinemann et al., 2016a; Wirth et al., 2016). They have begun the task of explicating the relationship between the ideological claim and the ways in which it manifests itself in communicative forms; yet the nature of the classifier has not as yet been explicated. In the course of furthering the work of teasing out these dimensions of populism and their interconnections, I keep ideology and style analytically distinct, even if they interact and interfere with one another in political reality (Ankersmit, 2002, p. 135), for the purpose of addressing some of the as yet unresolved definitional issues.

First, most studies with a focus on the political communication of populism naturally tend towards classifiers such as style, discourse or performance. Their object of study is the *process* or *form* of communication rather than the values and political concepts of its *content*. Yet the lack of conceptual clarity around the notion of style in these studies creates its own issues. Moffitt (2016, pp. 28–9) has gone a long way towards resolving this by engaging with the question of style in relation to populism. He defines political style as "the repertoires of embodied, symbolically mediated performance made to audiences that are used to create and navigate the fields of power that comprise the political, stretching from the domain of government through to everyday life". However, there are still some unresolved issues in this debate. These include how to connect Moffitt's focus on the constitutive properties of the performance of populism to the canon on populist ideas. I also suggest the importance of acknowledging not only these constitutive properties but also the value of the populist claim as a response to actual democratic conditions. Finally, the question remains of how to operationalise a study of populist performance since Moffitt's approach is entirely developed on the basis of secondary literature.

A further issue hinted at above with adopting the classification of style in analyses of populist political communication, is that such definitions often mix in ideational elements. The chief aspects, for instance, of Jägers and Walgrave's stylistic definition relate to the "guise" of populist claims – "using casual or colloquial language or adopting an informal dress code" (2007, pp. 322–3). Yet they also consider the content

of these claims under the same umbrella: populists' identification with the people, anti-establishment positions and exclusion of parts of the population. Likewise, Ostiguy (2009) and Norris and Inglehart (2018) adopt a stylistic definition of populism but establish this as an alternative cleavage in the *ideological* spectrum. Norris and Inglehart, for instance, oppose the style of populism to the value-based notion of pluralism. The difficulty here is marrying the *politics* of populism with studying communication.

Once again distinguishing between populist claims at face value – what is populists' ideological proposition? – and the ways in which such claims are performed becomes useful. Ernst el al. (2018) acknowledge this analytical division when they identify populist political communication as a mental construct that gives rise to key messages. They analyse the content of statements alongside the form or style of these statements. Their conceptual framework, however, suggests that ideology manifests itself in content alone. An additional difficulty, then, is to analytically distinguish between populist content and form but to acknowledge their interplay in the formation of meaning. Moffitt's stylistic definition solves this issue by focusing exclusively on performance. When he includes "appeals to the people versus the elite" in his stylistic definition, for instance, he is concerned not with the antagonistic relationship between the people and the elite as an ideological value but with the process through which the subject is constituted in populist discourse (Moffitt, 2016, pp. 43–4).

However, by bypassing the claim itself, Moffitt's exclusive focus on performance neglects consideration of the value of populist claims. While populists' engagement with the current problems of democratic representation may leave much to be desired, their claims do strike a nerve. They have also, in some contexts, been demonstrated to have positive effects on democracy (at least when retained in the form of claims rather than when transformed into behaviour by populists in power) (Huber and Schimpf, 2015; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012). I therefore propose that a communication perspective does not preclude a definition of populism based on the classifier of ideology (see also Reinemann et al., 2016a; Wirth et al., 2016), for it is important to retain a partial focus on the populist claim at face value. The importance

of this claim is evident both in its identification of substantive issues in representative democracy and in its potentially severe long-term consequences for democratic politics. However, I also posit that an ideological classification requires recognition of the ways in which ideology manifests itself empirically in communicative practices and forms, including in discourse and political performance. This goes to the heart of a communication perspective on populism. It retains recognition of both the ideational content of populism and the "emotional bond between populist players and significant segments of the population" (Block and Negrine, 2017, p. 183).

Wirth et al.'s (2016) ideology-based definition of populism that I put forward in the introduction is, like other ideology-based definitions, based on the concept of ideology in its 'thin' sense (see Freeden, 1998a, 1998b). Rather than constituting a full or coherent set of ideas that form a complete worldview, a thin ideology is "a loose complex of attitudes" (Krämer, 2014, p. 44). It can attach itself to a range of peripheral elements or 'host ideologies' that serve to fill in the ideology and give it situational form and coherence. This helps to explain the contextual nature of populism, its historical and situational contingency, as well as the enduring strength of its core concepts. As Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser (2013, pp. 498–9) put it, the thin ideology of populism is "a kind of mental map through which individuals analyze and comprehend political reality".

Some challenges have been raised against the notion of populism as a thin ideology based on this conception of ideology (see in particular Aslanidis, 2016). To overcome these, I develop the concept of ideology in some detail in chapter five in a way that explicates the relationship between ideology and performance in a communication approach. Briefly, I conceive of ideology from a neutral perspective as a mindset or value system, yet as constructed; and I shift the focus from ideology's conceptual structure onto its process of meaning-making for it is not only constructed, it is also constitutive. I argue that the starting point for the construction of populist ideology is not a logical system of beliefs and convictions but is ordinary people's perception of politics and political ideologies (Converse, 1964a; Saward, 2010). Yet people do not have a given, transparent and stable set of interests (Saward, 2010). Therefore, populist ideology is not necessarily based on what they believe (for some of this is a

populist construction) but on how they perceive politics. This inverse starting point to most established 'elite' ideologies explains, first, populism's many different faces in time and space; second, its lack of positions on some key political concepts that most full ideologies cover; third, how it grips people. It results in a different cleavage in the ideological spectrum that is essentialist and that disrupts party competition.

Populism is a phenomenon that clearly has an ability to tap into the discontents of its followers. It creates an emotional bond with, lends a sense of identity to, and engages the politically disaffected in ways that must be considered beyond the power of 'empty' rhetoric or strategic political manoeuvre. Indeed, these are arguably the very sources of such disaffection in the first place. In the face of public alienation from the political mainstream's dearth of authenticity and genuineness, how do populists manage to represent themselves as 'the real thing'? I suggest that their successful mediation of authenticity relies on more than the cult of personality and political style, although these are not without significance. It is grounded in a consistency between their values and the ways in which they are communicated. This perspective therefore also lends itself to an enquiry into the *performance* of ideology – that is, ideology as an intentional construction that seeks identification with a given audience. Moreover, such construction, which I will argue later in this chapter takes the form of representative claims, can be conceived as "constitutive activity" that involves offering constructions or images of constituents to constituents and audiences (Saward, 2010, p. 14). Finally, populist ideology's grounding in people's understanding of politics sets it up for effective communication. As a value system, it anticipates communication and a closer relationship between representatives and represented. Indeed, as we shall see, the communication of its ideology is an inherent part of its claim itself.

Put briefly, the ideology of populism manifests itself in a claim to representation. A communication perspective enables consideration of the claim in and of itself as well as of what lies behind the apparent (given) meaning of this claim. It allows us to question the ways in which the performance of populist ideology seeks to meet the challenges of the new media environment in its attempt to establish a representative relationship. By looking at how populist ideology is performed, it also queries how such a performance is shaped by the external democratic context. This accounts for

populism's "chameleonism" (Taggart, 2000). The many local colours of populism through time and space have made comparative study difficult (but also necessary) and have been the cause of the ongoing disputes over definition. Moreover, a communication perspective breaks down the dichotomy that dominates the literature between populism's supply and demand mechanisms (respectively the appearance of populist parties and the platform they offer, and constituency support for populist parties). For representational processes occur in the space in between representatives and the represented (Ankersmit, 2002); they involve not only articulation but also agency on the part of the subject.

A perspective on populism as an ideology that can be studied in its communicated form then overcomes the charge of essentialism that has been put to ideological definitions (Aslanidis, 2016, pp. 92–3). Aslanidis puts it that the "take it or leave it" dichotomous nature of populism as an ideology is betrayed by the gradational manifestation of populism found in empirical data. For instance, it is well known that we find more and stronger manifestations of populism across the political spectrum during election campaigns: political actors can 'act populist' to different degrees at different times. Yet you can be populist or not, in an ideological sense, even if you communicate using populist performative strategies to a greater or lesser extent for strategic purposes (Wirth et al., 2016, p. 39; see also van Kessel, 2014 for a related argument; Bossetta, 2017). I therefore consider the populist *claim* to be essentialist. It constructs an Us-Them dichotomy, and you either take it or leave it. But the way in which it is *performed* is gradational. Analytically separating claim and performance is therefore also helpful to resolve this long-standing issue in the literature.

I posit that such an analytical division between populist ideology and performance enables understanding, explanation and theorising. Yet the recognition of the intertwined nature of content and form in political reality is necessary for empirical study. Content and form, ideology and performance, engage in a mutually constitutive relationship of meaning-making. The content element of this approach addresses the canon on populist ideological values and concepts while the performance element introduces the more problematic process of representation.

2.3 THE MEANING OF REPRESENTATION

Let us now consider in more detail this analogy between the processes of meaning-making inherent in the relationship between ideology and performance and in that of content and form. I start by considering content and form at a more abstract level. I then draw a parallel between communicative processes of representation that involve the interaction between form and content and political processes of representation. This requires the adoption of an aesthetic and constructivist perspective on political representation in which the two uses of 'representation' come together. I then move on to consider the influence of context upon representational processes of meaning-making.

2.3.1 THE INTERCONNECTION OF FORM AND CONTENT

Chandler (1995, p. 104) reflects that Marshall McLuhan's assertion that "the medium is the message" suggests several simultaneous perspectives: "that the 'form' is the (primary) 'content'; that the 'form' of a text is itself meaningful; and that the separation of 'form' and 'content' is problematic." As we find most pertinently in poetry, in which expression is particularly self-consciously achieved through linguistic style, form and content are closely interdependent and both contribute to the making of meaning (ibid., p. 105). Stuart Hall extricates this relationship in his seminal work on representation ([1997]2013), where he outlines two systems of meaning-making: first, real-world phenomena correlate with a set of concepts that help us interpret the world; second, signs and symbols represent the concepts and conceptual relations between them. Hall follows Saussurean semiotics in which the concept (signified) and the form it is communicated through (signifier) together constitute a meaningful sign that bears relation to real-world objects, people and events. The process of representation is thereby in constant dialogue with a given audience and cultural context; yet it also produces culture; representation enters "into the very constitution of things" (Hall, [1997]2013, p. xxi).

We see this interplay between form and content in representational processes and practices not only in language and art but in all fields of communication to varying degrees. In his aesthetic approach to representation, Ankersmit (2013, 2002) brings the interconnection between form and content in meaning-making into the realm of

politics. He outlines two theories of representation: representation as resemblance or mimesis (a representation, such as a painting, should resemble what it represents) and as substitution (a representation is a replacement of something that is absent; for instance, a hobby horse does not look like, or have the form of, a real horse but has the same function and stands in for a real horse to the playing child) (2013, p. 458). Representation has different functions in these two perspectives: to *re*-present and to stand (in) for. When combining these two senses into one, representation comes to mean to make conceptually present (Boehm, 2012, p. 16) and stand in for, for instance, a marginalised group (Frosh, 2016).

We now have a notion of political representation in which a representative acts on behalf of a constituency and in the process of doing so "renders-present" (Arditi, 2003) that constituency. Though the concept of representation is used in different senses in the literatures of political science and cultural studies, certain perspectives share this common core of rendering-present. Arditi describes this as "summoning a presence in another place, bringing into presence through a substitute or, more in tone with political representation, an 'acting for others', for absent others, in a way that is responsive to their demands". Yet "that which 'returns' [is *re*-presented] cannot be reduced to an unaltered sameness" for "the task of 'rendering-present' introduces a differential element that modifies the absent presence of 'the people'" (2003, pp. 21-2). Conceiving of representation as a creative process, Saward's notion of the representative claim as an ongoing performance builds on this core aesthetic function. From this perspective, in the course of communicating populist ideology, populist representatives constitute their audience and their constituents through representative claim making (Saward, 2010). The notion of political representation as an aesthetic process is then both ideological and performative.

First, it is ideological because in this social constructivist approach to representation, things do not have meaning outside of how they are represented. Meaning is produced or constructed rather than discovered (Hall, [1997]2013, p. 11). Discourse is therefore shaped by power, by socially shared systems of ideas – that is, by ideology and ideological struggle – and it is a medium for exercising power through the practice of ideology. This view is based on a notion of ideology (which I detail in chapter five)

that resists pitting "'misrecognition' or 'false-consciousness' against a 'true objective knowledge'—a knowledge that can be grasped by means of a seemingly transparent linguistic medium" (Glynos, 2001, p. 193), yet still sees ideology as a form of necessary and ubiquitous distortion. The task of analysis is therefore to explain how some articulations come to be accepted as 'true' or naturalised and to identify the social consequences of different discursive representations of reality (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002, p. 21).

Second, this notion of representation is performative in its ability to construct reality. Representations manifest concepts in concrete form and through this process the physical forms and objects *constitute* the ideas in question (Lievrouw, 2014, p. 31). In keeping with her general approach, I apply the following words by Butler (who in turn builds on Austin's notion of *Doing Things with Words* (1975)) to not only language but to the multiple modes of discursive articulation or performance:

> We do things with language, produce effects with language, and we do things to language, but language is also the thing that we do. Language is a name for our doing: both "what" we do (the name for the action that we characteristically perform) and that which we effect, the act and its consequences. (Butler, 1997, p. 8)

One such socio-political consequence of the practice of representation is the constitution of the subject in discourses (Butler, 1997, p. 16; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002, p. 17). The ways in which populists constitute 'the people' and their interpellation of a given construction has consequences for the democratic agency of the people and therefore becomes a key normative concern. However so constrained, the constituted subject does have a degree of agency, for representation does not equate to articulation; processes of representation undertake meaning-making work that cannot be separated from their viewing. In political terms, I am therefore concerned with a communicative relationship between representatives and publics where representation involves an ongoing mutual process of interpretation and negotiation. The process of meaning-making is intersubjective. In this research, I use the term 'representation' to denote both the communicative process of portraying the

world through language and symbolic action and the political process of acting on behalf of a constituency and, in doing so, constituting that constituency.

2.3.2 THE ROLE OF CONTEXT

People function as agents of discursive and cultural change as they produce meanings and frameworks that influence social practices. They realise even the most regimented or ritualistic discursive act with new characteristics (Butler, 1997, p. 16; Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). While discourse is socially constituted, it is therefore also socially constitutive (Wodak, 2015, p. 51) as practices of representation are in constant dialogue with their context. Context can be understood as broader societal developments in the form of norms and conditions for action (Alexander, 1987, p. 289), which themselves are mutually constitutive. With respect to populist political communication I consider two dimensions of context in particular. First, the **democratic** context and its conditions in the form of, for instance, institutional rules and their implementation by power holders. These confine populist communication. Democratic norms become subject to challenge by populists but can also be turned into resources for populist representational practices. Second, in the **media** setting of populist communication, conditions for action take the form of technical affordances, ownership and legal and institutionalised frameworks. Norms include news values, relations between media and political actors, and the norms of use and imaginaries surrounding specific media and platforms. These latter constitute objects of challenge and resources for populist communicators within processes of mediation. Therefore, when we ask how populist ideology is performed – how ideas manifest themselves in the world and assume meaning – the answer is, as Tilly and Goodin (2006) suggest, "it depends". For meaning-making activity is at once confined by, and appropriates resources for creative expression from, its context.

Change then happens through discursive struggle to obtain the status of 'objectivity' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), where the winning hegemonic articulation has consequences for the socio-political context. Such discursive practices are imbued with a degree of indeterminacy and contingency: Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory stresses that "unity of meaning [of a discourse] is in danger of being disrupted by other ways of fixing the meaning of signs" (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002, p. 27). One actor's

performance can be disrupted by other actors. It is such disruption – by oppositional populists against what they perceive as the hegemonic discourse of liberal representative democracy – that is the object of analysis of this study. Populist disruption engages in discursive struggle to fixate the populist projection of reality. Populists thereby not only act within but also change their context. In the case of the particular mode of discourse of disruptive performance, the indeterminacy highlighted by Laclau and Mouffe is maximised.

Given the context-dependent nature of discourse, how does the mutual influence between context and such discursive struggles play out? Or rather, how does context shape populist communication, and how is context shaped *by* populist communication? Looking at populist communication as performance – an intentional, embodied activity that displays meaning that the actor(s) wish to have their audience believe (Alexander, 2004a, p. 530; Goffman, 1959) – allows me to answer the first part of the question. The notion of performativity, which considers how the performance realises its own claim in the process of claim-making, relates to the second. Given that an effective performance must be plausible and lead "those to whom their actions and gestures are directed to accept their motives and explanations as a reasonable account" (Alexander, 2004a, p. 530), performance can be a means of enabling the naturalisation of ideology. Investigating populism where it adopts the form of specifically disruptive performances makes performativity particularly relevant as such performances, by definition, involve a disruption of the context in which they take place and thereby seek to reconstitute it in new form.

Let us for a moment revisit the thought bubbles in Farage's head. As they escape, are performed and manifest themselves in material form, a representational process is underway. In the course of this process, something happens. The world changes. Reality is (re-)constituted through a process constrained by external conditions yet building on existing symbolic resources. Constituents are not only given voice but come into being. It is a beautiful thing. If the performance is successful – for of course it is intersubjective and, as I have already hinted, its journey within processes of mediation is perilous – this performance of representation decontests populist ideology.

2.4 POPULIST REPRESENTATION IN CONTEXT

Integrating communicative and political processes of representation allows us to consider the populist mode of political representation from a communication perspective. In order to apply the above perspective on meaning-making to populism, I now introduce in more detail Saward's notion of representative claim-making. I move on to suggest that, in the case of populism, disruptive performance is a particularly emblematic form of this claim that offers a number of useful analytical applications. I then end this section by considering the role of context as both constituted by and constitutive of the populist representative claim. In this respect I consider the claim in relation to both its democratic and media settings.

2.4.1 THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM

For the purpose of approaching the communicative manifestation of populist ideology in the process of representation, Saward's representative claim is a useful way of conceiving of the relationship between populist ideology and its performance. He argues for "seeing representation in terms of claims to be representative" (2006, p. 298):

> Makers of representative claims suggest to the potential audience: (1) you are/are part of this audience, (2) you should accept this view, this construction — this representation — of yourself, and (3) you should accept me as speaking and acting for you. (ibid., p. 303)

This approach sees representation as a process of claim-making with both the representative (the claim-maker) and the represented (the people) as aesthetically constructed entities. In this sense Saward turns the concept of representation around: the representative is not representing the people by being someone but by creating someone, both himself and the people. Further, according to this logic, the process of claim-making is a constitutive and ongoing process, not a settled affair at the completion of an election.

On the basis of this account of representation I consider the relational quality of populist ideology – the ways in which its constituent concepts shape each other – as a manifested in but also constructed through the process of claim-making. A claim

grounded in populist ideology constructs a relationship between constituted notions of the populist, the people and the elite. In the populist version of this claim, the people are then constructed as moral, homogenous and in opposition to the immoral elite who are depriving the people of their sovereignty, and the populist representative symbolically identifies with the people. The constitutive nature of this claim is encompassed in the notion of performance. The performance of the representative claim brings into being both constituents and claim-maker and enables me to query *how* the claim is constructed and the nature of the mode of representation that results. Further, while the populist representative claim pitches a homogenous people against the elite in an antagonistic relationship on the basis of populist ideology, such claims are performed to an active audience.

The limited extant literature on populism and representation (Arditi, 2003; Caramani, 2015; De Cleen and Jamin, 2016; De la Torre, 2014; Mastropaolo, 2017; Roberts, 2017; Vittori, 2015) focuses on this populist claim at face value (Moffitt, 2016 excluded, who focuses on the constitutional character of the claim at the expense of its face-value content): populists claim to be like the people. On the surface, this claim corresponds to Ankersmit's resemblance theory: populists offer symbolic means of identification with the people through physical resemblance. It is worth noting at this point that the notion of aesthetic representation (Ankersmit, 2002) neither presupposes a preoccupation with the aesthetisation of politics, nor an aesthetic (or stylistic) definition of populism. Rather, it concerns itself with the creative construction and representation of power relations between representatives and the represented: with the ways in which populist ideology manifests itself communicatively and through this process constitutes reality, the represented and the representative. Just as meaning-making in aesthetic processes of representation involve an interconnection between form and content, so does the process of representative claim-making take its meaning from an interrelation between the claim itself and its performance.

When the act of claim-making becomes the subject of analysis, in addition to the claim itself, that more problematic – and interesting – aspect of communication emerges that views the claim-maker as a political actor with an interest in constituting a particular reality. This approach enables us to consider the democratic implications of

the claim and the means through which it constitutes the representative relationship. I therefore concern myself both with what the populist claim posits and with how it is constructed through symbolic action. This dual perspective on claims and claim-making is also necessary to consider the inevitable mediation of the populist claim. Mediation is in itself a problematic process, and the new media environment places significant challenges upon public representatives. It is therefore natural that populists and other representatives anticipate such challenges whilst seeking to make the most of the opportunities that go with them. To investigate the ways in which they do so, I again look beyond the claim in ideological terms and consider its performance. I do not propose that populist ideology manifests itself in one style or type of performance (indeed, it is highly contextual, as Ekström et al. argue, forthcoming). Rather, I approach political performance as a means of communicating core populist ideas and concepts through symbolic action. Through this communicative process, performance conveys, shapes and contributes to the meaning of political ideology. It is shaped and inspired by its cultural, historical and socio-political context, and is oriented towards an audience, often with mediation in mind. Political, like social, actors, "embedded in collective representations and working through symbolic and material means, implicitly orient towards others as if they were actors on a stage seeking identification with their experiences and understandings from their audiences" (Alexander et al., 2006, p. 2). I argue that populists do this particularly effectively through disruptive performance.

2.4.2 DISRUPTIVE PERFORMANCE AS PARADIGMATIC POPULIST CLAIM-MAKING

I approach disruption as an emblematic symbolic manifestation of populist ideology that is geared towards processes of mediation. I adopt it here as a multi-faceted and significant analytical concept. I define disruptive performances in parliamentary institutional contexts "literally as a disruption of parliamentary business and procedure, and figuratively as a disruption of the norms embedded within the ritual of parliamentary debate" (Spary, 2010, p. 338). Disruptive performance helps explain and analyse populists' most central signifying practices as they use it in a variety of different forms and functions that together constitute an expression of populist ideology. It challenges mainstream politics by pitching the elite against the people through an explicit and spectacular struggle over democratic norms and procedures.

Populist disruption in particular also involves a symbolic identification between the populist and the people as it performs the representative relationship suggested by populist ideology. Populists embody the people, for instance by dressing like the people, using ordinary language or "bad manners" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 44) which in themselves are forms of disruption of ordinary institutional behaviour and political speech. They engage in symbolic action that disrupts institutional norms and procedures and thereby antagonises the elite. As they themselves identify with the people, this disruptive action serves to pitch the people against the elite in a Manichaean relationship. Their disruptive behaviour is then legitimised by reference to the sovereignty of the people. Simultaneously disruption transforms institutional spaces into effective sites for the mediation of populist representative claims. In doing so, it speaks – loudly and unabashedly – to the conditions of the new media environment. Disruptive performances are therefore a rich source of data on populist meaning-making processes.

Populist disruptive performance has four core analytical facets. First, as we have just seen, it is a manifestation of populist *ideology*. The symbolic action of disruption functions as a communicative manifestation of the populist representative claim and seeks to impart a message to its audience. Second, the moral dimension of populist ideology disrupts *party competition* (Norris and Inglehart, 2018) as it dismantles the left-right ideological cleavage in the political spectrum and resurrects a new cleavage based on morality. Third, the populist representative claim is *performed* and thereby intentionally constructs the relationship between populists and the people. Fourth, building on the notion of populist disruption as a strategic performance, I consider it as simultaneously aimed at constituents and the media, where its inherently attention-grabbing qualities meet the challenges of the new media environment. As populist representative claims are *mediated*, they harmonise with processes of mediation in relation to mainstream media institutions and new media technologies, imaginaries and norms of use.

2.4.3 THE CLAIM IN CONTEXT

As we saw above, both concepts and their form are shaped by, and themselves shape, the context in which they play out. So it is with the representative claim and its

aesthetic performance. Based on a philosophical approach that conceives of performance as socially constructed and as socially constitutive, I conceive of meaning as historically and culturally contingent. Context is therefore of utmost importance in the constitution and interpretation of meaning. I focus on two broad aspects of context – the political institutional setting and the media setting of the populist representative claim – and briefly review what the literature tells us about their role in populist meaning-making.

Much has been made in the literature of populism's relationship to democracy. While I do not cover the substantial literature on populism and democracy here, I briefly note the role (or lack of it) that is attributed to context in these studies, in order to arrive at an argument concerning populism's inherent responsiveness to its democratic environment. Of the extensive scholarship on populism and democracy, little concerns itself with the ways in which populism adjusts to different institutional and democratic contexts. The dearth of empirical, comparative studies is to blame. Most of the literature on populism and democracy argues that there is tension between populist democracy and liberal democracy (for example, Canovan, 1999; Meny and Surel, 2002a; Mudde, 2007; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014; Taggart, 2000) or that populism is opposed to liberal democracy (for example, Abts and Rummens, 2007; Pappas, 2014). When defining populist democracy, most of these scholars focus on plebiscitary elements and their discord with pluralism (Akkerman, 2005; Mudde, 2007, among others). Most, if not all, of these studies, however, are based on Western Europe, and many even narrow their focus to radical-right forms of populism. Analyses and theoretical conjectures on populist democracy are thus highly context specific and potentially entangled with regional political culture as well as dominant host ideologies of populism, such as nationalism. Moreover, most studies also consider populist democracy as a more or less static concept. This is at odds with populism's contextual nature and over-simplifies its relationship to liberal democracy. While we see populist attempts to reduce disintermediation in processes of political representation around the world, we find, for instance, this aim taking the form of plebiscitary democracy in some contexts and delegative democracy in others (see O'Donnell, 1994) where direct representation is interpreted as a president embodying the will of the people. Populism's strength lies in its elasticity to respond to its environment, to continually

adjust and justify itself democratically in response to certain factors in that environment.

Let us now consider a couple of key texts that do point out this ideological flexibility of populism. In his discussion of European radical-right types of populist democracy, Mudde (2007, p. 156) notes in passing the contextual nature of populism in its response to the system in question: the more liberal a democracy is, the more anti-system the populist (radical right) will be. This incidental point deserves further comparative attention, especially inter-regionally and beyond Mudde's radical-right focus, as it highlights the contextual nature of populism's normative idea of democracy. As an ideology based on anti-elitism, the populist representative claim necessarily takes its shape in response to the given elite and dominant paradigm that it opposes.

In a theoretical paper Rovira Kaltwasser (2014) picks up on this point. He argues that populism offers responses to two of Dahl's dilemmas, which are inherent in liberal democracy: the boundary problem (how to define the people) and the limits of self-government (where the liberal response in the form of constitutionalism is in tension with the democratic response of popular sovereignty). The balance of these elements of liberal democracy is contingent on the given historical and political context (ibid., p. 477). I would therefore also expect populism's response to the dilemmas – in the form of their representative claims – to be relative to such context. Indeed, Rovira Kaltwasser outlines three alternative scenarios where populism's response to the dilemma of the limits to self-government differs and results in different conceptions of sovereignty. First, when populist forces do not have major complaints about the underlying constitutional order, their focus is on the performance of the establishment. Second, populist forces may claim that the existing constitution has been made to protect the interests of the establishment. Third, populists rigidly defend the constitution against any form of judicial interpretation or progressive 'living constitutionalism'. Rovira Kaltwasser does not hypothesise on any external contextual reasons behind these different manifestations of populist ideology. However, his chosen examples indicate a certain trend that points to the regime type in question, especially its liberal democratic elements, and to the level of consolidation in the form

of public support of institutions such as the constitution. Based on these studies, I therefore expect both the content of the populist claim and its normative goal to differ according to its democratic institutional context.

As to populism's influence on its democratic environment, a few studies (Arditi, 2003; Huber and Schimpf, 2015; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2012) consider the effects on democracy across states of democratisation. These studies identify the populist party's position of power as a key independent variable. They find that populism has a negative effect on liberal democracy when in power and a positive effect when in opposition and that this effect is moderated by the level of consolidation (Huber and Schimpf, 2015). In the present study, only the consolidation variable is relevant as I have isolated the variable of the parties' position of power and look only at opposition parties (see chapter three). The above-mentioned studies focus on populist ideology and do not consider populist communication as such. Discourse and performance-focused conceptualisations of populism (such as Laclau, 2005a; Moffitt, 2016) suggest that populist communication performatively constitutes both the subject and the crisis that necessitates swift action on behalf of the populist, often through utilitarian and instrumentalised politics (Moffitt, 2016, p. 45). Taken together, these studies suggest that populist communication performatively influences its democratic environment most forcefully in contexts of lower levels of consolidation.

Context also matters to meaning-making in terms of the media setting. Conceiving of the populist representative claim in aesthetic terms as performed shifts the focus from questions of forms of representation to the mechanisms of representation (Moffitt, 2016, p. 49). Within processes of mediation, such mechanisms include the institutional, material (technical as well as behavioural) and imaginary properties of communication media and platforms. Meaning is not only created in a process of mutual influence between performance and claim but is also shaped in anticipation of and within processes of mediation. Given that the performance of the populist claim contributes to its meaning, and that it is also dependent on the media setting, mediation is central to the communicated meaning of the populist representative claim. Cranmer (2011), Boss and Brants (2014) and Ernst and colleagues (2018) all demonstrate that institutional media logics play a part in this process. In addition, I

consider the use of social media imaginaries a means of symbolic communication (Couldry, 2015a; De Blasio and Sorice, 2018; Gerbaudo, 2014), while populist performance is also adapted to and given meaning by material affordances and norms of use of different media technologies (Lievrouw, 2014). For this reason, I follow Bode & Vraga's (2018) call for the importance of multichannel studies of political communication in hybrid media systems. Restricting the study to one medium not only misses the nature of modern political communication and the way it plays out in the hybrid media system. It also risks the assumption that populist political performance associated with one medium or platform can be generalised to others; and it fails to consider how a populist communication style harmonises with different media.

2.5 DISCUSSION

The journey that populist concepts undertake from conception to mediation and the various influences they encounter on their way through different media and political settings demonstrates the importance and interconnection of three concepts to a communication perspective on populism: ideology, performance and mediation (Figure 2.1). To understand and explain populism from a communication perspective I suggest that we need to break down existing dichotomies between form and content, ideology and performance and to recognise their interrelated and mutually constitutive nature in empirical reality. In processes of representation – communicative as well as political – they are intimately connected.

I posit that it remains useful to classify populism as an ideology to retain focus on the populist claim and the problems it responds to in representative democracy, for we ignore these at our peril. Yet such a classification does not condemn us to neglect populism's communicative properties or a concern with the constructed and constitutive nature of such a claim. Rather, it necessitates a shift in focus from the exclusive concern with the concepts and values that compose populist ideology onto the processes through which they come about and play out in empirical reality. This in turn suggests it is necessary to revisit the morphological basis of conceptualising ideology for the purposes of classifying populism. I address this matter in chapter five.

In the preceding discussion I have argued for an analogy between, and integration of, communicative and political processes of representation. I have suggested that the interaction between form and content in *communicative* processes of representation is mirrored in the interaction between ideology and performance in *political* processes of representation. This analogy forms the foundation of a conceptual framework for the analysis of populist political representation. Such a framework conceives of the performance of populist ideology as symbolically enacting the populist representative claim while anticipating processes of mediation. I contend that this approach resolves many of the problems in the literature related to the classification of populism. Recognising the intertwined and mutually constitutive nature of ideology and performance in empirical processes of meaning-making, instead of discarding one concept in favour of the other, simultaneously enables us to analytically separate them. This artificial separation explains the essentialist nature of populist ideology and the gradational nature of populist performance as a device that can be used strategically by a variety of actors in different circumstances.
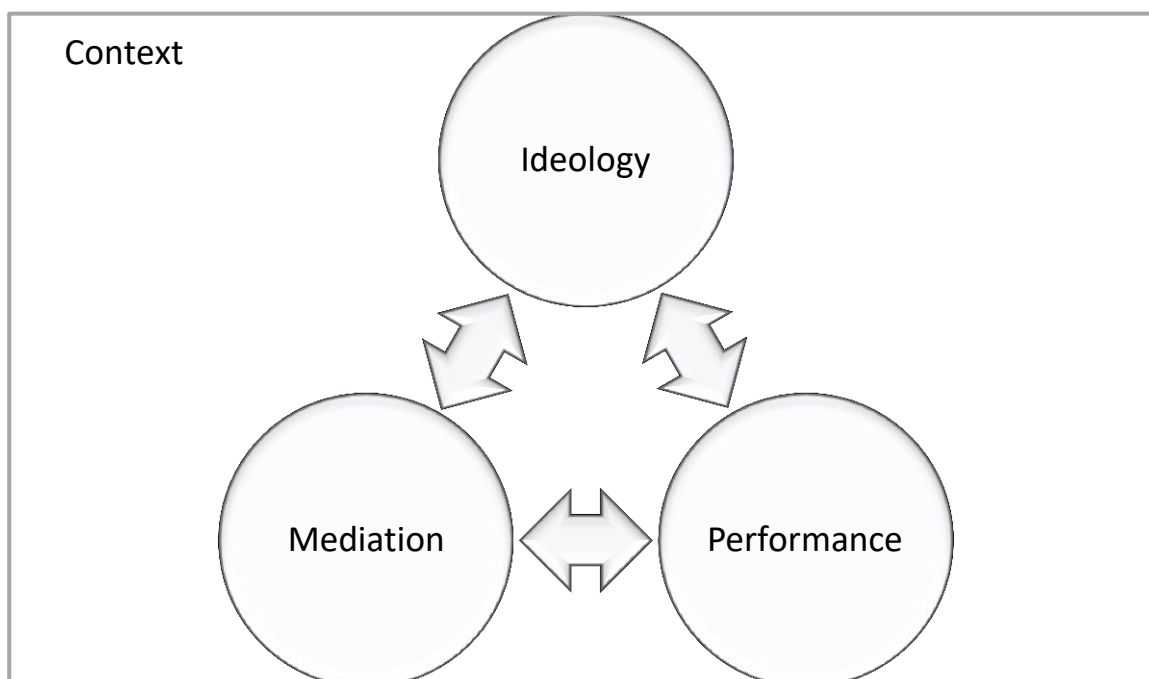
FIGURE 2.1: The process of representation

Using this framework I analyse the populist representative claim at three levels of meaning-making. First, I consider the populist representative claim **at face value**. This enables me to examine the mode of representation offered by the claim and to

recognise its foundation in real democratic problems within a given context. I also allows me to pinpoint its differences across populist parties in different contexts and thereby engage with the role that context plays in communicating populist ideology. Second, I have suggested that the performance of the claim plays into its intended meaning as performance symbolically communicates populist ideas. I therefore also approach the claim **as a performance** aimed at (potential) constituents. As I have argued above, the typical performance of the populist claim takes place through disruption. I therefore focus in particular on how populist ideology is constituted through disruptive performance as well as on how this performance is shaped by its democratic conditions and in turn has consequences for those conditions. Third, I explore the populist representative claim as a performance aimed at the media and as taking place **within processes of mediation**. In the remainder of this study I address these three dimensions in turn.

In this chapter I have established the interrelated nature of populist ideology, performance and mediation in the communication of populism and its resultant mode of representation. I have argued that all three of these concepts are socially constructed through means that anchor them in their given context but that they also have constitutive properties that in turn have implications for that context. We are now in a position to consider the methodological connection between a communication perspective on populism and its empirical manifestation, which we turn to in the next chapter.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

My aim in this study is to deepen our understanding of populist communication and mediated populist representation, and to explore how these processes play out in different democratic contexts. In order to achieve this, I seek to understand and explain the socio-political processes underlying populist communication, investigate the mechanisms through which these processes come about, and reflect on their implications for politics and the social world. The research questions explore three distinct but overlapping concepts in relation to populist communication – ideology, performance and mediation – that connect the conceptual framework of the preceding chapter to the method outlined in this chapter.

My main research question is,

How can populism be understood and explained from a communication perspective?

This question can be further broken down along the main theoretical concepts that inform this study:

Ideology:

- How is populist ideology constructed through communicative processes?

Performance:

- How does disruptive performance communicatively manifest a populist mode of representation?

Mediation:

- How does populist communication harmonise with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment?

I finally ask a further cross-cutting comparative question:

- How does the comparison across different democratic contexts add to our understanding of populist communication?

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is a comparative case study, comparing two populist parties situated in liberal-democratic contexts, yet displaying clear contrasts in the more specific elements of their historical and socio-political conditions. The case study approach allows for a thick description of the cases as situated in their respective contexts, while the comparative design enables the drawing of parallels and contrasts between the two distinctive, multidimensional contexts. Given this nuanced approach, I refrain from identifying specific aspects of political conditions as independent variables in a strict cause-effect relationship and comparing on this basis. As Downey and Stanyer (2010) also point out in their recommendations for comparative research, media and communication phenomena can rarely be adequately explained by straightjacketing them into one simple causal relationship. Yet I have selected the cases with a set of assumptions in mind about broader aspects of conditions that can be expected to play a part in practices of populist communication and representation. These include democratic pathway and current status, dominant mode of political representation, party position and party 'host' ideology. Selecting cases on this basis allows reflection on both the impact of context on populist communication and on the implications of populist communication on its political environment. For while such conditions simultaneously inspire and confine populist performances, they are also subject to change as a result of them. These material conditions then constitute the framework of the research design; yet my concern is with how populists portray this reality, and change it in the process of doing so.

3.2.1 CASES

My two case studies are the parties UKIP and the EFF. I investigate UKIP's communications in the period leading up to, during and immediately following the UK's EU referendum on 23 June, 2016. I look at the EFF's communications in the period from the State of the Nation Address (SONA) on 12 February 2015, to the SONA on 9 February 2017.

3.2.2 COMPARATIVE FRAMEWORK

I have selected the two cases of UKIP and the EFF to investigate the phenomena of populist communication and representation based on the conditions outlined in Table 3.1 (grey shaded cells indicate similarities between cases; white cells indicate differences).

CONDITIONS	UKIP, UK	EFF, SOUTH AFRICA
Overall democratic context	Liberal democracy enduring populist challenges Regionally powerful with strong economy	Liberal democracy enduring populist challenges Regionally powerful with strong economy
Democratic pathway and current status	Established representative democracy; stable Strong institutions Strong delivery mechanisms Liberal media system[4]	New, transitional democracy (dominant-party rule); backwards trajectory[5] Weak institutions Weak delivery mechanisms Hybrid media system (similar to polarised pluralist model)[6]
Dominant mode of representation	Focus on action on behalf of citizens at the cost of identification between citizens and representatives	Focus on identity and similarity between representatives and citizens at the cost of responsiveness and action on behalf of citizens[7]
Party position	Opposition	Opposition
Party 'host' ideology	Right-wing ('libertarian'[8])	Socialist

TABLE 3.1: Selected democratic conditions in the UK and South Africa

Although I aim to provide a thick description of two different and rich democratic contexts with the case study approach, a number of similarities between the cases reduces the complexity and enable clearer generalisation of findings. With my focus on populist representation, the two parties are both situated in liberal representative

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[4] (Hallin and Mancini, 2004)
[5] (Freedom House, 2015)
[6] (Voltmer, 2011)
[7] Based on Pitkin's (1967) typology of modes of representation. See also Caramani (2015).
[8] Self-identifies as such (UKIP, n.d.)

democracies[9]. This constant enables a more sensitive and nuanced comparison of how different dominant modes of political representation in the two countries encourage different populist responses in the form of oppositional representative claims. Such different modes of representation have grown out of historical trajectories of both populist politics and transition to, or development of, liberal democracy. While established norms and social myths in the two countries form different sources of legitimacy for populists – such as the continued liberation movement in South Africa or public denunciation of increasing professionalisation and cartel politics in the UK – democratic and institutional conditions create different restrictions and opportunities for populist action in the form of, for instance, institutional fragility or rigidity.

Both countries are relatively economically powerful, ensuring a developed and competitive media system and a significant level of internet penetration (see below). An additional selection criterion for my case studies was the factor of party position. Key comparative studies on populism identify party position as a strong variable on the effects of populism on both media coverage (Mazzoleni et al., 2003) and democratisation (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2012). Other studies note the importance of populist parties' position with respect to their performance and communication strategy (e.g. Akkerman and de Lange, 2012; Albertazzi and Mueller, 2013; Bartlett, 2014; Cheeseman and Larmer, 2013; Heinisch, 2003, p. 94; Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, 2015). I do not follow these studies in comparing populist cases across the factor of party position or focus on parties in power. Rather, I have chosen to isolate the factor of party position and focus exclusively on populist opposition parties. This approach has several advantages: first, populism tends to be more pronounced when in opposition and therefore easier to study. Second, it ensures that media coverage and hence communication strategy do not rely on the advantages of power. Finally, rather than analysing populism's effects on democracy, focusing on opposition parties enables me to identify strategies and traits that may seek to change a nation's democratic pathway, before it happens. Once in power, a limited number of

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[9] There is a growing literature that argues that populism is directly associated with liberal representative democracy (see amongst others Abts and Rummens, 2007; Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2008; Arditi, 2003; Canovan, 1999; Kriesi, 2014; Mair, 2002; Meny and Surel, 2002b; Panizza, 2005; Rovira Kaltwasser, 2014).

options are available for dealing with such a scenario (Rovira Kaltwasser and Taggart, 2015).

Instead of diverging across party positions, I investigate cases situated in different geographical regions. This enables the study to speak across localised sub-types of populism that tend to evolve among countries of close geographical proximity and with shared historical features, such as the populisms of Latin America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and so on. Further, I look at parties whose 'host ideologies' are situated at opposite ends of the traditional left-right ideological spectrum. This comparison aims to address outstanding conceptual issues in the literature and ensures that the parallels I draw are not specific to the host ideology but rather tell us something about populist ideology itself.

Finally, both parties are highly active on Twitter, despite differences in the digital divide[10] and the majority of both sets of constituents not being frequent users of the platform. Hence both parties appear to use Twitter for similar purposes, as a direct communication platform to speak to wider and elite audiences and to the media.

3.2.3 THE OBJECT OF STUDY: DISRUPTIVE PERFORMANCE

Disruptive performances of parliamentary institutional contexts are the objects of analysis. Disruptive performance has not been conceptualised in the literature on populism and only to a very limited extent in the field of political communication in general (Johnson, 2013; Spary, 2010; Spary et al., 2014). However, as I argued in the preceding chapter, I conceive of disruptive performance by populist actors as an especially emblematic manifestation of populist ideology that is geared towards processes of mediation through an explicit and spectacular struggle over democratic norms and procedures. Disruptive performances are therefore a rich source of data on processes of populist communication and representation in relation to mediated

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[10] My main concern here is of course the less developed infrastructure of South Africa and its large digital divide. Regionally, however, the country has a highly developed media infrastructure, with an internet penetration rate of 40% in 2017 (World Wide Worx, 2017a) and growing at an exponential rate. Social media use is also growing rapidly. 2017 saw 14 million active Facebook users, while Twitter had 7.7 million active users (World Wide Worx, 2017b). Most South African users (85-7%) access social media via their mobile telephones (World Wide Worx, 2014), which suggests that the demographics of social media users are more varied than one might expect. Given these patterns of access and use, I consider both my case studies satisfactory for digital research, although I retain awareness of inequalities especially in the South African case, as described in section 3.4.5.

events. The institutional focus of this type of event provokes conflict with elites and existing power structures. However, it also means that the horizontal Us-Them antagonism that often accompanies populism as a vehicle of its constructions of the people is relatively absent. This does not mean that it is not present in other contexts in both of the two cases – the anti-immigration stance of UKIP and the anti-white rhetoric of the EFF are otherwise very prominent aspects of their forms of populism.

Disruptive performances constitute nested units within the comparative case study design. I consider each disruptive performance as the manifestation of a representative claim. This enables comparison across nested units *within* a case study in order to look at differences in claim-making, in responses to disruptions, and in consequences of disruptions over time. The design further allows comparison *across* case studies in order to consider the implications of – and to – different socio-political environments. Together, the nested units of each case study illustrate different facets of UKIP's and the EFF's performances of their representative claims in their given contexts. The events selected as objects of analysis are the most prominent recent disruptive performances by the EFF and UKIP:

1) EFF's disruptions of then-President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation Addresses (SONAs), delivered on 12 February 2015 and 9 February 2017 in the South African Parliament in Cape Town.

2) A series of disruptions of the European Parliament (EP) by UKIP MEPs:
   a. 5 April 2017: Farage calls Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) mafia/gangsters during Article 50 debate.
   b. 1 February 2017: Farage defends Trump and accuses the EU of being undemocratic.
   c. 28 June 2016: Farage's EU referendum 'victory speech'.
   d. 1 July 2014: UKIP MEPs protest during the EP opening ceremony.

I selected the above disruptive performances for their institutional settings (national and supra-national parliaments) to enable comparison of differences in institutional conditions and responses. However, I approach disruptive performances as broader events than instances of symbolic action confined to the institutions in which they climax. Given their dramatic structure and my focus on their performativity and appeal

to the media, I include the build-up phases and denouement of the performances that take place through legacy and other media.

3.2.4 MIXED METHODS APPROACH

I use a mixed methods concurrent nested design (Cresswell et al., 2003, pp. 229–30), which integrates the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. I undertook simultaneous, though iterative, data collection and sampling of quantitative and qualitative data, with weight given to qualitative data.

In the analysis I give priority to qualitative research, nesting the quantitative element within this. The quantitative data forms the basis for a descriptive analysis and reconstruction of the events that are the objects of study, placing the populist disruptive performances in a broader mediated context. Primarily, however, I use the quantitative element for purposes of zoom-in sampling of Twitter data for interpretive analysis (Gerbaudo, 2016). In my qualitative analysis I again integrate quantitative methods at the interpretation stage in order to triangulate and contextualise my interpretation of primarily qualitative data. I detail these processes in sections 3.3 and 3.4 of this chapter.

3.2.5 SOCIAL MEDIA RESEARCH

While my main objects of study are disruptive performances, these include 'virtual' as well as 'live' performances. In the case of mediated performance, I focus on the platform of Twitter as both the primary social media platform that enables hashtagged conversation by the public and as the platform most used by the two case studies and their party leaders. In my approach to social media, I take into consideration certain material conditions that provide a framework for performance in addition to the political institutional conditions noted above. For instance, media institutional characteristics such as commercial and ownership structures and legal terms and conditions affect media logics (Esser and Strömbäck, 2014). The technical affordances of a given platform also dictate its use by and utility for populist actors; as do practices of use, such as the way in which content is watched and shared across platforms and throughout the media ecology (Chadwick, 2013; Meyer, 2002). Norms, as patterns of social action, shape behaviour and are reinforced by user practices (Lievrouw, 2014). These material properties of media interact with, sustain and recreate the more

abstract social and cultural properties of symbols, myths and social imaginaries (Mansell, 2012; Taylor, 2002) specific to social media, such as "the myth of 'us'" (Couldry, 2015a) and the imaginary of the "common man" (Gerbaudo, 2014). As Couldry puts it, the notion of myth can:

> help us see an underlying pattern in how, as societies, we make sense of organising things around assumptions that certain types of information, expertise and knowledge are more valuable than others and offer us a privileged view on the reality of social life. These myths are not merely an elite production: we are all, potentially, involved in producing these myths through our everyday actions. (2015b, p. 642)

Such myths are in turn perpetuated by platform owners (Van Dijck, 2013a) and can be used to forge identities through mediated ideological performances.

This approach to mediated performance has three advantages. First, live as well as digital (see also Isin and Ruppert, 2015) and otherwise mediated communications can be conceptualised as performances that are undertaken in the context of particular norms and conditions of specific media and platforms. This in turn overcomes the old/new media divide in a media ecology approach with more fluid boundaries. Second, the currently standard big data approach to social media study is unable on its own to answer interpretive questions concerned with meaning and its contextual construction. As in Geertz's famous example of a boy's wink/twitch taking on contrasting meanings in different contexts (1973, p. 6), so does the interpretation of the meaning of a 'like' or a retweet require understanding of its socio-political context, process of mediation (see also Gerbaudo, 2016) and conversation of which it forms part. To answer the question of how populism can be understood and explained from a communication perspective, I adopt a chiefly interpretive approach that considers action in its context in my investigation of digital and other symbolic forms of action. Part of this context is the conversation (for instance, through hashtagged indexing on Twitter) in which a social media post or other action takes place. Another part is the wider norms and conditions of the medium or platform, of the media ecology and system, and of the democratic context as a whole. In the mix of methods briefly introduced above I therefore supplement interpretive analysis with quantitative

observations that I use to describe the context of interpretation for qualitative analysis, identify relevant smaller samples, substantiate interpretations and fill in gaps in the description of my case studies.

The consideration of both material aspects of media – institutional frameworks, technical affordances and practices of use – and the more abstract social patterns of meaning-making, such as myths, has a third and final advantage: its ability to cut across what Boczkowski and Siles (2014) have described as "silos" of media scholarship in the areas of production, consumption, content and materiality. They call for an integrated cosmopolitan approach to media technologies that are not confined to any one of these silos. A communication approach that integrates form and content cuts across these silos of content and materiality. This is reflected in my approach to the two interpenetrating dimensions of material and imaginary properties of media that constitute the context for meaning-making within processes of mediation. In addition, in the next section I detail a methodological approach to performance that takes a step towards accounting for both of the dimensions of production and consumption. To do so I map the received performance on Twitter to moments of the populist projected performance.

3.3 DATA SAMPLING AND COLLECTION

In this study I look at a number of interlinked datasets that together comprise a set of disruptive performances. The nature of social performance is a complex, intersubjective experience that involves embodied projection by actors, reception by an audience and, in most cases of political performance, a process of mediation connecting the two. For each disruptive performance, the data sets therefore include: the projected performance by populist actors, which is the main focus of the study and which includes the populist actors' justification for and legitimisation of the disruption; the mediated performance in the form of media coverage of the disruption in mainstream media as exemplified by newspaper coverage; and a received performance as gauged through public Twitter conversations giving an immediate public reaction to the disruption. I conceive of these as a typology of ideal types that are not mutually exclusive – for instance, the mediated performance coincides with the projected performance in the case of populists' tweets and with a received

performance in the case of public reactions on Twitter – but are theoretically and methodologically useful. Together the data sets of projected, mediated and received performances provide a multi-dimensional, rich picture of the disruptive performances, their immediate contexts and the interaction between live events, digital and print media in the media ecology.

The sampling periods are informed by the demarcation of each disruptive performance according to the populist projected performance, since this performance is the focus of my research questions. While I include media coverage and social media commentary on the performance, I therefore allow the projected performance to override the mediated performance. In other words, the performance ends when the populist actors' communications about the event peter out, even if media coverage is still ongoing. My analysis of the event thus does not necessarily show how the event goes down in history.

I base my approach to data collection on the methods of issue and conflict mapping, which consider how issues travel across media types and online platforms and between online and offline events (Burgess and Matamoros-Fernández, 2016; Graeff et al., 2014; Marres, 2015). I conduct much of my data collection online using digitally native methods (Rogers, 2013), using tools such as Google Trends and Twitter web searches (see section 3.3.1).

I collected the following data:

	UKIP	EFF
TIME FRAMES	a) 1 – 7 Jul 2014 b) 28 – 29 Jun 2016 c) 29 Jan – 2 Feb 2017 d) 4 – 6 Apr 2017	a) 1 Jan – 26 Feb 2015 b) 2 – 14 Feb 2017
PROJECTED PERFORMANCES		
LIVE PERFORMANCES	4 (live recordings, YouTube; EP recordings; BBC; EFDD Group's website; EP minutes)	2 (live recordings, YouTube; Parliament of the RSA website; Hansard transcripts; official minutes)
PRESS RELEASES[11]	20	16
PARTIES' AND PARTY LEADERS' TWEETS[12]	149 unique tweets, or 101,312 tweets with retweets	976 unique tweets, or 47,952 tweets with retweets
RADIO SHOWS	2 (LBC website; YouTube)	
NEWSPAPER COLUMNS	4	
PROMOTIONAL VIDEOS	1 (YouTube)	
MEDIA INTERVIEWS		1 (live recording, YouTube)
RESOLUTIONS	1 (tabled in the EP; EP website)	
PRESS CONFERENCES		3 (live recordings, YouTube)
MEDIATED PERFORMANCES		
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE	25 (Nexis)	99 (Nexis; National Archives, RSA)[13]
MEDIA TWEETS	See received performance	See received performance
OTHER PRESS STATEMENTS	1 (Seb Dance website)	3 (Parliament of the RSA website)
RECEIVED PERFORMANCES		
TWEETS ABOUT EVENTS	16,916 unique tweets, or 83,230 tweets with retweets[14]	376,079 unique tweets, or 947,371 tweets with retweets[15]
TWITTER 'MOMENTS'[16]	1 (Twitter Moments website)	
GOOGLE TRENDS	5 searches[17]	9 searches[18]

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[11] The EFF renewed their website and URL since the 2015 event and old press releases were not available. I captured these from the original website with the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine (https://archive.org/web/). For UKIP I include press releases from UKIP's, UKIP MEPs', and the EFDD Group's websites. 2014 press releases were captured with the Wayback Machine.

[12] Twitter is both parties' social media platform of choice. Analytically, I still consider tweets 'mediated' although they form part of the projected, not the mediated, performance. I cleaned out all tweets not directly relating to a given event. I carefully verified Malema's account; it has since become officially Verified on Twitter.

[13] Search terms: SONA OR "state of the nation" AND (EFF OR Malema), 1 Jan-26 Feb 2015; (SONA OR "state of the nation" OR parliament) AND (EFF OR Malema), 2-14 Feb 2017; (Farage OR UKIP) AND (EP OR "European Parliament" OR Brussels OR MEP* OR EU), 1-7 Jul 2014; (Farage OR UKIP) AND (EP OR "European Parliament" OR Brussels), 28-29 Jun 2016; (Farage OR UKIP) AND (EP OR "European Parliament"), 29 Jan-2 Feb 2017; (Farage OR UKIP) AND (EP OR "European Parliament"), 4-6 Apr 2017. Nexis was unreliable for *Business Day* in 2017 so I supplemented with an online search of their archives for verification.

[14] Search terms: (tweets in English only) (Nigel OR Farage) AND (speech OR EP OR "European Parliament" OR @Europarl_EN OR MEP OR MEPs OR EU), 4-6 Apr 2017; (Nigel OR Farage) AND (speech OR EP OR "European Parliament") 28 Jun at 8:33 am (first relevant tweet) -29 Jun 2016; (Nigel OR Farage) AND (speech OR EP OR "European Parliament" OR @Europarl_EN OR MEP OR MEPs) 1 Feb 2017 at 14:48:43 (first relevant tweet) -2 Feb 2017; (Nigel OR Farage) AND (speech OR EP OR "European Parliament" OR @Europarl_EN OR MEP OR MEPs), 4-6 Apr 2017.

[15] Search terms: (tweets in English only) #SONA OR #SONA2015, 1 Jan-26 Feb 2015; #paybackthemoney, 1 Jan-26 Feb 2015; #bringbackthesignal, on 12 Feb 2015; #SONA OR #SONA2017 OR #Asijiki OR #FearFokol, 2-14 Feb 2017.

[16] Twitter Moments is Twitter's own news service.

[17] Search terms (searches made within the UK): "'Nigel Farage' or 'UK Independence Party'", 17 Jun-16 Jul 2014; "Farage or 'Nigel Farage'", 27-30 Jun 2016; "European Parliament and Nigel Farage", 27-30 Jun 2016; "Nigel Farage and European Parliament", 1 Jan-28 Feb 2017; "Nigel Farage", 22 Mar-19 Apr 2017.

[18] Search terms (searches made within South Africa): "pay back the money", 20 Aug 2014-26 Feb 2015; "SONA", 1 Jan-26 Feb 2015; "SONA2015", 1 Jan-26 Feb 2015; "state of the nation", 1 Jan-26 Feb 2015; "pay back the money", 2-14 Feb 2017; "Zuma must go", 2-14 Feb 2017; "SONA", 2-14 Feb 2017; "SONA2017", 2-14 Feb 2017; "state of the nation", 2-14 Feb 2017.

TABLE 3.2: Datasets of UKIP and the EFF's projected, mediated and received performances

To reconstruct the **projected live performances**, I selected and combined a number of data sources and pieced together the real-life event from these as faithfully and accurately as possible using methods of verification and triangulation. I recorded both linguistic and extra-linguistic modes in a complete transcript of events that specifies the mosaic of original primary data sources. For example, in the case of the EFF's disruption of the SONA 2015, the Parliamentary video recording does not show images of the EFF's eviction from the chamber but has the camera focused on the Speaker of the House. The Hansard transcript only contains the linguistic elements of the disruption and in some cases include additional explanatory text that was never uttered by the participants it is attributed to in the transcripts. My transcript records the events as they actually happened, as far as possible. For the projected performances I also included data sources that emerged as salient through iterative engagement with the data, including newspaper columns, radio shows, promotional videos and broadcast interviews. I was able to supplement the data for the projected performances with two semi-structured interviews with UKIP MEPs that I conducted as part of the COST IS1308 project on Populist Political Communication in Europe[19]. Unfortunately I was unable to conduct corresponding interviews in South Africa.

For the **mediated performances** I searched four mainstream newspapers. The sample included both elite and tabloid newspapers from across the political spectrum and can be seen to broadly represent mainstream media coverage as well as to reflect the plurality of the mainstream media sphere in the two countries. For South Africa, the newspapers are *Mail & Guardian* (elite, left-wing), *Business Day* (financial, elite), *Daily Sun* (largest tabloid) and *The New Age* (elite, owned by the Gupta family, who are closely associated with then-president Jacob Zuma). For the UK, the newspapers are *The Guardian* (elite, centre-left, supported Remain), the *Daily Telegraph* (elite, centre-right, supported Leave), the *Daily Mail* (tabloid, right, supported Leave), and *The Mirror* (tabloid, centre-left, supported Remain). I searched all newspapers in their print editions through Nexis, except the *Daily Sun*, which I obtained through manual searches in the National Archives in Cape Town. For each disruptive performance, I

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[19] https://www.populistcommunication.eu/ (accessed 28 March 2018).

included articles that mentioned the event in the title or first two paragraphs, mentioned the party or party leader anywhere in the article and had a minimum length of two paragraphs. Where Nexis returned more than one version of an article, the latest was selected. I excluded readers' letters.

For the **received performances** I collected Twitter conversations about each disruptive performance. Where possible, I identified relevant hashtags through iterative engagement with the data and collected data based on these for the relevant period of the disruptive performance. Where no hashtags were generated, I used keyword searches relating to the event. I combined these in search queries with known key actors and specific time intervals. I then undertook extensive manual data cleaning to remove irrelevant tweets from the sample. In most cases this was an iterative process as relevant search terms were refined and/or identified through familiarising myself with significant moments of the disruptive performance and new emerging hashtags. The UKIP events did not generate hashtags of their own (and the search terms may therefore capture less of the relevant Twitter posts about the event) but were selected to ensure focus on the central actors as they performed in the specific setting of the EP. I supplemented the Twitter datasets with Google Trends searches, where I collected normalised search volumes for key Google searches undertaken from within the UK and South Africa within a given time period. Google Trends allocates the number 100 to the peak of search interest and expresses other volumes as essentially percentages. Where available and relevant I also referred to opinion polls to develop my understanding of the underlying context of public opinion in which the received performance took place.

3.3.1 EXTRACTION OF TWITTER DATA

I used the tool Mecodify[20] to extract and analyse data from Twitter. Unlike most other tools for this purpose, Mecodify enables the extraction of historical Twitter data from Twitter's web search (that is, Twitter's own Advanced Search function), rather than being restricted to the seven-to-nine-day historical limit on Twitter's API. As for API searches, Twitter does not reveal the exact criteria for what is included in the results of

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[20] The tool is freely available from http://www.mecodem.eu/mecodify/ but requires a server to run from and some experience of coding to install. It was developed as part of the Media, Conflict and Democratisation (MeCoDEM) project.

its web search so the limitations of this approach are unknown. The completeness of Mecodify's extracted sample appears to be related to its size (Al-Saqaf, 2016, p. 13). All my samples were of a relatively modest size, below 200,000 unique tweets for individual datasets from each event.

Mecodify outputs a list of all tweets, including images and links, and/or tweeters matching the search criteria. The metadata of a given tweet relates to the specific search criteria. For instance, the number of retweets of a given tweet will only be counted within the period of the search criteria; it may have been retweeted more times after the end of that period. The volume of tweets and retweets can be viewed on a time-series graph and can be exported as a csv file.

3.3.2 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

My social media data sets include tweets by both public figures (such as populist politicians, celebrities, journalists and media organisations) and private individuals. The ethical issues relevant to my study relate to the privacy and anonymity of social media data: the ability to identify individual users and the contextual nature of privacy. The tweets of public figures are without doubt intended for public consumption, and these users can be considered to be aware of potential uses of their content by the media and researchers. Ethical issues are therefore confined to the tweets of private individuals who may arguably be less aware of the public nature of their tweets.

My study only uses publicly available content where no registration or group membership is required to view it. The data is not sensitive and has a low risk level as it involves no groups of vulnerable users. I therefore have not felt a need to seek the consent of users. Yet the ethical implications of, and guidelines for, social media research are evolving, and I have therefore had approval by the university's Research Ethics Committee (approval reference LTCOMM-027). I considered the following:

Identifying individual users

My study collects hashtagged tweets by private individuals. Moreno et al. (2013) argue that in a study of a given topic on social media that does not collect any profile owner identities, the unit of analysis is the page (or, in my case, the tweet or retweet), rather than the profile owner and thus should not be considered human subject research (see

also the Association of Internet Researchers' report, Markham and Buchanan, 2012, p. 6). However, Zimmer notes that "even if one feels that 'all identifying information' has been removed from a data set, it is often trivial to piece together random bits of information to deduce one's identity" (2010, p. 319). Moreover, Moreno et al. (2013) also point out that quotes by social media users entered into a search engine can often be used to identify a user. In quantitative analyses I therefore only include hashtagged tweets by private individuals as aggregate data. In qualitative analyses, I avoid the use of recognisable quotes longer than a few words from tweets by private individuals. In all cases, I anonymise names and account names.

The contextual nature of privacy

According to a dignity-based theory of privacy,

> …merely having one's personal information stripped from the intended sphere of the social networking profile, and amassed into a database for external review becomes an affront to the subjects' human dignity and their ability to control the flow of their personal information (Zimmer, 2010, p. 321).

Thus, I consider the "contextual nature of privacy" (ibid., p. 323), as also advocated by boyd (2008), both in the context of the platform and the individual act on that platform. Moe and Larsson elaborate: "Users' ideas about what is restricted and meant for the private sphere, and what is in the open and intended for the public, vary substantially, and might not match the researchers' impression, or the service provider's intentions" (2012, p. 121). In the context of my study, it is therefore worth noting that the content by private individuals to be included is only produced in the context of public discussions in hashtagged conversations relating to public political events. By proactively including such hashtags, users are clearly intending to engage in a public, political discussion with other people they do not know, in a manner comparable to commenting on online news sites.

3.4 APPROACH TO DATA ANALYSIS

Although populist ideology can take many forms, it manifests itself most emphatically in disruptive performance. My empirical analysis of disruptive performances by each of my cases consists of two interlinked parts:

1) A chronological, descriptive analysis that reconstructs the events on the basis of the projected, mediated and received performances, mostly based on quantitative data.

2) An in-depth, interpretive analysis of the projected performance by populists.

My approach to data analysis is inductive, prioritises interpretive analysis and is aimed at theoretically developing the three core concepts of ideology, performance and mediation in relation to populism. It builds on an important emerging body of work on interpretive approaches to the analysis of social media data during conflict and protest events (Gerbaudo, 2016; Innes et al., 2016; Roberts et al., 2017) and on Bode and Vraga's (2018) call for cross-platform research in political communication. In the following I first outline the descriptive and mainly quantitative element of the mixed-methods approach. I then move on to the more prominent interpretive analysis of the projected performances. This element of the method centres on the use of three sensitising concepts (Blumer, 1954) that constitute analytical focal points in a multimodal inductive analysis.

3.4.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

The descriptive analysis reconstructs and maps populists' projected performances, the mediated and the received performances as well as the interaction between different elements of the media ecology and live events. It serves several purposes:

- It reconstructs the events as they really happened by bringing together multiple accounts and undertaking extensive verification and triangulation. As such, it constitutes the collective representation that is broadly accepted as reality (Farmer, 2012). The descriptive analysis identifies the basic social processes that are going on in relation to the disruption, as well as points of contention in the portrayal and signification of events by populists, the media and the Twitter public.

- It is a means of gaining rich and sufficient data by collecting background data on the actors, processes and settings involved and obtaining detailed descriptions of key actors' views and actions (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 18–19), thus providing detailed context that can inform interpretation and comparison across cases.

To conduct the analysis, for each disruptive performance I first read through all press releases, media stories and most popular tweets to identify significant 'live' events and points of contestation of signification between projected, mediated and received performances. I reconstructed the live event and visualised the general pattern of ebbs and flows in attention in relation to each event on two graphs:

HISTOGRAM OF THE PROJECTED, MEDIATED AND RECEIVED PERFORMANCES

The histogram extends over the full period of the disruptive performance and is visualised in days. It shows the engagement of populist actors, print media and Twitter users in relation to significant episodes of the event. To plot it, I exported as csv files the volume of tweets by day for two datasets: that of the populist party and party leader's tweets (projected performance) and that of public discussion on central hashtags relating to the disruption (received performance). I plotted these along with normalised volumes of newspaper articles[21] (mediated performance). I then identified on the histogram significant 'live' and mediated moments of the event to visualise interaction within the media ecology in relation to important moments of the disruptive performance.

I summarised these points of interaction in a descriptive analysis that formed the basis for further interpretive work. I also identified and described issues of contention and struggles over signification between the projected, mediated and received performances. For the Twitter dataset of public tweets, I used peaks in tweet volumes as a zoom-in sampling mechanism and read through the content of the top 20 most retweeted tweets in each peak, followed all links, watched all multimedia content and read linked-to news stories. This enabled me to determine how popular (conceived as

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[21] There is a potential for distortion when normalising and comparing data on significantly different scales, such as the low volume of media articles in relation to tweets. However, I justify this risk as my chief interests lie in trends over time and in using the attention volumes as a guide and sampling mechanism for further quantitative and qualitative analysis (see also Graeff et al., 2014).

the most retweeted) activity on Twitter relates to the live events, the basis of the peak's formation (few tweets with many retweets versus a cacophony of many less retweeted voices), the types of tweets and tweeters favoured by the Twitter public, and the dominant public evaluation of the events on Twitter.

For the Twitter dataset of populists' tweets, I also identified similar peaks of activity and samples and conducted a similar analysis. Further, I extracted and retained these smaller samples of populist tweets for in-depth analysis of the projected performance (see section 3.4.2).

TIME-SERIES GRAPH OF THE CLIMAX: PROJECTED (LIVE) PERFORMANCE AND RECEIVED PERFORMANCE (ON TWITTER)

For this graph I zoomed in on the climax of each performance in parliament (visualised in minutes) to match the public Twitter discussion (received performance) to moments of the live event in parliament. The graph visualises offline-online interaction in the form of real-time public reaction to the populist disruption. To create the graph, I exported as csv files the volume of tweets by minute for selected sets of public Twitter data. I described the projected, live performance in parliament in full based on sources of video footage and identified significant moments of action and contention and the time they occurred. I then plotted these on the time-series graph to identify points of interaction between the projected performance and the audience reaction. As above, I used peaks in public tweet volumes for zoom-in sampling and read through the content of the top 20 most retweeted tweets in each peak of Twitter activity and described them. This enabled me to gauge the real-time audience response to specific moments in the live disruptive performance.

3.4.2 INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF PROJECTED PERFORMANCE

The interpretive analysis of populists' projected performance is the primary part of the method. It has an iterative and cyclical character in which theory and empirical research is in constant communication. To achieve this balance methodologically, my interpretive approach relies on three sensitising concepts which theoretically inform a multi-modal analysis, yet retain theoretical flexibility and openness in an inductive approach. The datasets are direct (as in, un-gatekept) communications by the populist parties, primarily press releases, live recordings of performances in parliament and

tweets. The analysis builds on the descriptive reconstructions of the events and the background context these analyses provide.

SENSITISING CONCEPTS

I use sensitising concepts to focus and guide my analysis. They differ from definitive concepts in their lack of specification and serve as points of reference in an inductive approach (Blumer, 1954, p. 7; Carpentier, 2017, pp. 75–9). While sensitising concepts may alert us to important aspects of research situations, they may also direct attention away from other important aspects. Therefore it is important to approach the coding process with an open mind to any theoretical direction. As Bowen states (2006), quoting Padgett, "the ultimate survival of a sensitising concept 'depends on where the data take us; emergent concepts may supplement or displace them altogether'". Sensitising concepts are a way of explicitly acknowledging the researcher's preconceptions and ideas while balancing these with an open-ended, inductive inquiry of the data. As Dey (quoted in Charmaz, 2006, p. 48) suggests, "There is a difference between an open mind and an empty head." I adopt three sensitising concepts to guide my analysis, all of which we briefly explored in the preceding chapter and which I develop in more detail in chapters five, seven and nine respectively: ideology, performance and mediation.

TRANSCRIPTION AND CODING

I transcribed the live events in parliament by piecing together a variety of sources (see Table 3.2). I adopted a score layout (in the format of a music score sheet; Maiorani and Christie, 2014) with separate annotation tiers for simultaneous modes of symbolic action. Each tier – or mode of symbolic action – has its own unit of coding: line-by-line coding for speech, and incident-by-incident coding, where an incident is the production or issuance of the symbol, word or sentence in the performance of the (speech) act (Loxley, 2007, p. 46). This approach enables me to code at multiple levels of analysis simultaneously, for instance to code the overall incident of the disruption as well as its constituent elements (dress, gesture, and so on). This approach is consistent with grounded theory's acceptance of different levels of abstraction for codes, given that they are constantly compared (Charmaz and Bryant, 2016).

I proceeded inductively with coding through several iterative cycles that related back to the sensitising concepts as the top level of hierarchical codes, yet I stuck closely to the data without forcing these pre-existing categories onto them. I based codes on processes rather than themes so as to portray meanings and actions, in keeping with my concern with the construction of meaning, in order to capture the story in its telling, not the narrative or its themes. In a subsequent process of interpretation, I integrated parts of my quantitative data analysis for triangulation and contextualisation and returned to the qualitative data for further coding where needed.

ANALYSIS

Disruptive performance – like any political performance – communicates through multiple modes of symbolic action: dress, speech, gesture, key, and so on. As Geertz argues, we can gain empirical access to a:

> …symbolic system [of culture, of behaviour, and hence of discourse and performance], the underlying structure of which it is a surface expression, or the ideological principles upon which it is based… by inspecting events… even if [they are]… constructed in multiple tongues and as much in action as in words (1973, pp. 17–18).

The approach of multimodality (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), which acknowledges these multiple modes of meaning-making, therefore informs my investigation into populist representative claim-making. I adopt a meso-level analytical perspective in relation to text. At the macro end of the spectrum, abstract discourses circulate in society (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002, pp. 157–8). At the micro end, researchers are concerned with meaning-making through linguistic detail (ibid.). In a multi-modal analysis, this would involve detailed analysis of each mode of communication, which would result in an unfeasible scope of analysis. It would also miss the semiotic struggle inherent in disruptive symbolic action. A meso-level perspective captures this by focusing empirically on situated discursive practices in specific interactional contexts. Looking at semiotic practices-as-representation (rather than at practices-as-language) warrants a higher level of abstraction that considers semiotic practices as (speech) acts (Austin, 1975; Butler, 1997; Isin and Ruppert, 2015; Loxley, 2007), and where the unit

of analysis therefore is the production or issuance of the symbol in the performance of the (speech) act (Loxley, 2007, p. 46) and not the word. I conceive of text as materialisations of meaning, and focus is on the meanings, representations and ideologies embedded in them. The approach then interweaves semantic aspects of language with the pragmatic aspects of actions consistently with Alexander's cultural pragmatics approach to social performance (2006). The struggle over meaning that this approach captures is at the root of populist ideology and its manifestation in disruptions of dominant semiotic claims. The method of analysis is therefore based on an understanding of populism as an epistemological struggle against established systems of meaning through the communicative and performative constitution of reality.

In the analysis of populist communication, I paid particular attention to the moral agonism inherent in what Alexander terms "performing the binaries" (Alexander, 2006, p. 61; see also Van Dijk, 2016) and to chains of equivalence (Carpentier and De Cleen, 2007; Laclau, 2006; Phillips and Jørgensen, 2002) to assess how the populist parties construct reality in different media. In particular, I considered the binary structure of the populist argument, its foundation in the nature of populist ideology and how populists use this structure to identify and define the key features that they support and oppose. Inspired by an inductive grounded theory approach, I used my sensitising concepts flexibly to:

- define and theoretically develop the phenomena of ideology, performance and mediated representation in relation to populism through an iterative and structured coding process;
- focus the study on processes and action (Charmaz, 2006, p. 9), such as how the process of populist representative claim-making is achieved through symbolic action;
- relate such action to specific democratic contexts, scenes and situations of action (Charmaz, 2006, p. 21); and
- compare within and across cases and contexts, through grounded theory's strategy of constant comparison, to enable generalisation about the

phenomena of ideology, performance and mediated representation in relation to populism.

These principles lend rigour to the method, provide explicit guidelines for, and strategies of, how to proceed with a structured qualitative enquiry, move analysis beyond description onto questions of explanation, and ground theoretical formulations soundly in empirical data.

3.5 BRIEF SUMMARY OF METHOD

In this chapter I have outlined a research design and interpretive method for the analysis of populist communication across the media ecology. I adopt a comparative approach to explore the phenomenon of populist communication through two case studies. These are populist parties situated in different democratic contexts: UKIP, a right-wing party from an established liberal democracy (UK), and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), a left-wing party from a transitional democracy (South Africa). The objects of study are disruptive performances by these parties in live, virtual and other mediated forms. I consider such performances emblematic manifestations of populist ideology as their essential function is to establish an antagonistic relationship between the elite and populist actors who embody the people; they seek to visibly overturn established norms and construct a 'new normal' (Kress, 2017). While democratic conditions and media systems and technologies provide a framework for comparison, my analytical concern is with how populists portray this reality and change it in the process of doing so. Using mixed methods with an interpretive focus, the case study approach paints a rich picture of the interaction that takes place between context and the constitution of meaning in populist communication.

Step by step my method proceeded as follows:

Starting out with a literature review of populism, I identified sensitising concepts and research questions. I collected qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously, using quantitative methods to zoom in on smaller samples for qualitative analysis. I collected three data sets: projected, mediated and received performances covering a total of six disruptive actions by the two parties. My data set on the projected performances – that is, the populist actors' concern with the events in their own communications –

dictated the sampling period of all data. In a descriptive analysis of all data sources I reconstructed the events and identified key acts of signification and contestation over meaning between actors. To do so I mapped the data on timelines of key events and identified intersections and relations between different mediated performances and live events. The mapping resulted in a histogram of each set of projected, mediated and received performances and a time-series graph of their climaxes. These formed a basis for later qualitative analysis.

I then undertook the main interpretive analysis of the projected performances, doing an initial fast and intuitive round of coding followed by a second cycle of focused coding. I developed codes inductively but with my sensitising concepts in mind. Throughout I reflected on the sensitising concepts and other emerging concepts and their role in the given social process in memos. During the coding process, I engaged in constant comparison between codes, between disruptive performances and between cases. I identified important instances of symbolic action and returned to the descriptive analysis and histograms to gauge audience response to these. Through a review of advanced memos, I identified any needs for further sampling, and repeated the whole process iteratively until new data did not result in further theoretical development. I then discarded, adopted and refined concepts through a process of theoretical memo-writing and interpretive analysis.

In chapters five to ten I develop my key concepts of ideology, performance and mediation, which were also my sensitising concepts. Following each theoretical chapter I engage in an empirical analysis that focuses on the given concept and related research question. I first describe the six events that are the objects of study, based on the reconstructions described in section 3.4.1 above.

4. PERFORMANCE EVENTS

The objects of study of this research are a total of six performances by the UK Independence Party (UKIP) and the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), which I briefly describe in this short chapter. The climax of each performance is set in the parties' respective institution as public representatives – the European Parliament and the Parliament of South Africa. The performances take place in the period 2014 – 2017. While the EFF's performances are very elaborate and feature extended build-up phases, UKIP's performances chiefly consist of the climactic moments within the European Parliament themselves. Given the brevity of UKIP's performances, I have therefore selected four events for UKIP and two for the EFF. While each performance is self-contained, the two series of performances can also be seen as key moments in larger trajectories. UKIP's performances lead up to the EU referendum and engage in its climax and denouement, while the EFF's performances lead up to the resignation of Jacob Zuma as the President of South Africa in February 2018.

4.1 THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS: THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS, 12 FEBRUARY 2015

On 12 February 2015 the EFF disrupt the president's State of the Nation Address (SONA) for the first time, in what becomes an almost ritualised annual protest action. Their performance shines a light on the crisis of South Africa's democratisation process. Up until this moment, the ANC government have increasingly been challenged by opposition parties and the public on its lack of responsiveness and Zuma on his personal lack of accountability and trustworthiness (Lekalake, 2015). Public service delivery protests have been wrecking the country for several years. President Zuma continues to be embroiled in the serious Nkandla corruption scandal in which he is accused of embezzling public funds for upgrades to his Nkandla home. And his response to critique is becoming increasingly authoritarian: police firing at, and killing, striking Marikana miners in 2012, expelling the opposition party the EFF from the National Assembly in August 2014 when they raise the question of corruption (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2014) and, more recently, firing successive finance ministers who choose to oppose him (Raymakers, 2016) and censoring the

public broadcaster SABC's protest coverage (Jones, 2017). In the dominant-party regime, performing the role of opposition has not become easier as the democratisation process has progressed. It is against this backdrop that the drama of the EFF's disruption of the State of the Nation Address in 2015 unfolds, a state of affairs where the role of democratic opposition can, in their view, only be performed effectively through disruptive action.

In the months leading up to the State of the Nation Address (SONA) on 12 February 2015, the EFF continue to seek legitimate occasion to confront President Zuma about the Nkandla case but Zuma's avoidance strategy does not give them the opportunity. The EFF then inform the Speaker of Parliament, Baleka Mbete, that they intend to question Zuma during his SONA if they are not given another opportunity before then. The EFF continue to warn of impending disruption to the SONA in statements, tweets and press releases in the weeks leading up to the event (EFF_press1; EFF_press4; News24, 2015b). On their side, the government mobilises extra security personnel (SABC, 2015; Steenhuisen, 2015). The EFF respond by representing themselves as fighters for democracy in the face of "threats of police brutality", evoking the legacy of Nelson Mandela (EFF_press1). Ramping up expectations, they further warn the public to expect a "security threat" during SONA, where riot police will "manhandle" EFF MPs that raise a point of order into a "secret dungeon tunnel" (EFF_press8; EFF_tweet20). In a final play-off before the actual SONA event, the EFF announce that they will hold an "alternative SONA" on Robben Island, the location where Nelson Mandela and other freedom fighters were held prisoner during the Apartheid era (EFF_press9). However, they are forced to cancel the event when the Robben Island Museum unaccountably closes the island ferry for last-minute "essential repairs". The EFF claim the closure is politically motivated (EFF_press10; Sapa, 2015).
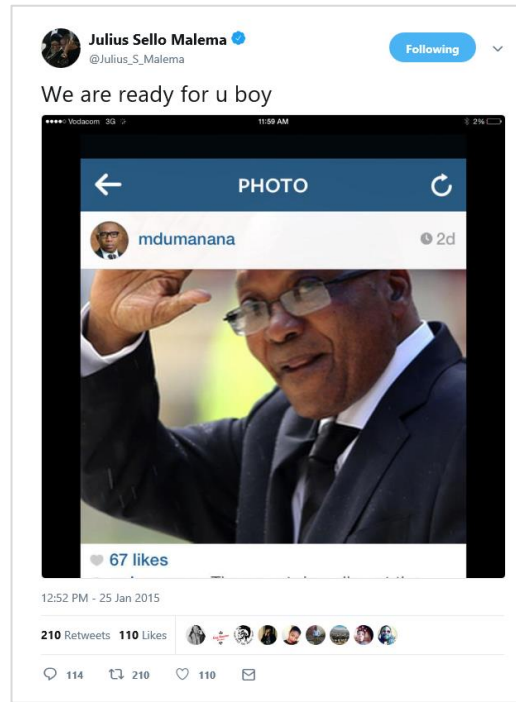
FIGURE 4.1: EFF leader Julius Malema builds up tension via Twitter in advance of the SONA (EFF_tweet32). Credit: @Julius_S_Malema, Twitter, 25 Jan 2015.

On the day of the SONA, the EFF set expectations by pushing the hashtag #paybackthemoney on Twitter (EFF_tweet21). While police and armed military line up outside parliament, EFF MPs clad in their distinctive red overalls and plastic miners' helmets dance up the red carpet to the National Assembly while chanting "pay back the money".

As the proceedings in Parliament begin (EFF_live1), it soon turns out that the government have planned for the EFF's disruption in other ways than training security officers. Journalists realise that there is no cell phone signal in the chambers. The hashtag #bringbackthesignal starts to circulate on Twitter. Journalists within the chamber loudly demand the signal back, and eventually a signal jamming device is discovered in the chambers and dismantled. An hour later than planned, President Zuma takes to the podium to deliver his speech.

Within a few lines of Zuma's speech, the SONA is interrupted for the first time since the advent of democracy in South Africa in 1994. EFF MP Godrich Gardee rises on a "point of order" with reference to parliamentary rules and asks, "When are you going to pay back the money?" (EFF_live1). The Speaker permits him to ask his question, then dismisses it with reference to the occasion of the day. From this point onwards,

events escalate. EFF MPs one by one rise "on a point of order", requesting to speak. As the Speaker's patience wears thin, she eventually orders them to leave the chamber. The EFF insist on their constitutional rights. Security personnel are called in and they are evicted by force.

FIGURE 4.2: The *Mail & Guardian*'s coverage of the event the morning after the SONA (EFF_news1). Copyright David Harrison, *Mail & Guardian*, 13 February 2015.

The ruckus in Parliament is audible in the background of the live broadcast footage aired by the public broadcaster SABC. However, the cameras remain squarely focused on the impassive Speaker as the government has ordered that EFF MPs not be shown. Soon, however, footage filmed on mobile telephones emerges via Twitter. In a press conference outside Parliament shortly after, Malema explains to the press that seven EFF MPs have been taken to hospital with serious injuries.

FIGURE 4.3: The EFF hold a press conference outside Parliament following their eviction. Credit: SA Daily News, YouTube, 12 February 2015.

4.2   THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS: THE STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS, 9 FEBRUARY 2017

Since the 2015 SONA, the EFF have performed a very similar disruption of the 2016 SONA. A Constitutional Court order has ruled, in a case filed by the EFF, that Zuma has breached the constitution by not repaying government money spent on his Nkandla home as dictated by the Public Protector. The weakened position of Zuma is reflected in the ANC's performance in the municipal elections on 3 August 2016, where popular support for the ANC falls to its lowest level since independence in 1994 at 53.9 percent of the total vote and they lose the capital Pretoria (Electoral Commission South Africa, 2016). Cut to February 2017.

The EFF's build-up phase to this event is much more limited than in 2015, but public expectations are clear. A few days before the event they issue a press release condemning Zuma's deployment of 441 military personnel for the supposed maintenance of law and order during the SONA (EFF_press11), which Parliament has just announced (News24, 2017). The EFF describe this initiative as "the unleashing of the army on the people of South Africa". They also accuse Zuma of "planning to murder those he disagrees with at the SONA" and introduce the label of "constitutional delinquent" (EFF_press11) to denote Zuma's continued non-

compliance with the Constitutional Court Order, which becomes a refrain in their performance.

FIGURE 4.4: EFF MPs dressed in red domestic workers' uniforms and plastic miners' helmets dance and sing liberation struggle songs on the red carpet leading up to Parliament (EFF_tweet22). Credit: @EFFSouthAfrica, Twitter, 8 Feb 2017.

Shortly before the SONA is about to start, a remarkable conglomeration of performances take place in- and outside Parliament: MPs and VIPs arrive on the red carpet accompanied by the flash of the cameras, their political supporters ululate, and they give lengthy comments to enquiring journalists on their choice of glamourous dress (Bendile, 2017). EFF MPs, in contrast, arrive in their red overalls and "Fear fokol" (fear nothing) T-shirts (EFF_live3). Meanwhile rival protests erupt outside Parliament by ANC and EFF supporters who start fighting and are dispersed by police in riot gear using stun grenades (BBC News, 2017), while military bands march the streets.

FIGURE 4.5: EFF MPs dressed in red shouting "Tsotsi!" (thief) at Jacob Zuma as he takes to the podium (EFF_live2). Credit: Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, YouTube, 9 February 2017.

As Zuma enters the chamber, EFF MPs shout "Tsotsi! Tsotsi! Tsotsi!" (thief) and ANC MPs counter with shouts of "ANC, ANC, ANC", all falling into tune with one another so the parties' shouts rhythmically alternate (EFF_live2). The EFF repeat their performance of previous years of interrupting on points of order, starting by accusing the government of arming security personnel with "biological agents" and cable ties, which they hold up as proof. As Zuma attempts to start his speech, all political parties do their best to mimic – and appropriate – the EFF's strategy of disrupting on points of order. This results in a cacophony of disruptions from the EFF and the Democratic Alliance (DA), as well as the ANC itself engaging in counter-disruptions, all of which end up effectively delaying Zuma's speech for over an hour. EFF leader Julius Malema's microphone continuously cuts out when he attempts to speak. Outside Parliament, riot police gather and prevent journalists from going to the National Assembly exit point (EFF_mediatweet1) where EFF MPs will soon be thrown out. The EFF are eventually forcibly evicted from Parliament.

FIGURE 4.6: White-shirted security personnel forcibly evict EFF MPs from Parliament (EFF_live2). Credit: Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, YouTube, 9 February 2017.

Someone throws pepper spray, or possibly tear gas, from the public gallery. When DA MPs stand to question the unconstitutional presence of riot police and soldiers in Parliament, they are foully abused by ANC MPs shouting "Fuck you, racist" and other insults. The DA then also walk out, followed by other opposition parties. Zuma delivers his speech to a half-empty chamber of ANC MPs. Upon their exodus from the chamber, opposition leaders Julius Malema (EFF) and Mmusi Maimane (DA) in turn speak to the press outside Parliament. Meanwhile EFF MPs tend to their injured under the lights of the flashing cameras, while stun grenades can be heard in the background (Whittles, 2017).

4.3   THE UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY: OPENING CEREMONY OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 1 JULY 2014

UKIP have just won the European Parliamentary elections in the UK and now have an unprecedented 24 MEPs (up from 13 in the previous election for the European Parliament). They announce their strong presence in the European Parliament (EP) with a symbolic statement on its opening day on 1 July. They do not communicate their intent to protest. The day before, on 30 June, however, the ceremony of the

raising of the EU flag by military personnel takes place. UKIP create a video, which they post on YouTube (UKIP_vid1), in which they condemn the ceremony.

FIGURE 4.7: Screenshots from UKIP's promotional video about the EP flag raising ceremony (UKIP_vid1). Credit: UKIP MEPs, YouTube, 30 June 2014.

The next day they stage a "March for Freedom" (UKIP_press4; UKIP_press7), which they publicise in press releases showing a picture of the group of UKIP MEPs with Farage in the centre walking across the square towards the EP. This goes unnoticed by the media. During the EP opening ceremony, an orchestra plays Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, the unofficial anthem of the EU. MEPs in the chamber stand up. Nigel Farage and his fellow UKIP MEPs, however, stand with their backs turned during the entire piece.

FIGURE 4.8: Farage writes his weekly column in the Daily Express on UKIP's protest during the EP opening ceremony (UKIP_col1). Copyright: Express Newspapers, 4 July, 2014.

Before the debate starts, Martin Schultz is elected as EP President, which Farage describes as a "stitch-up" in his speech to the chamber the next day (UKIP_live3). Both he and UKIP Deputy Leader (and short-lived Leader) Paul Nuttall condemn the EP for its lack of democratic representation which is not discharged by the "naked militarism" of the flag raising ceremony and anthem. Farage brings up the promised UK referendum on leaving the EU as the only "progressive" and democratic solution. UKIP's silent protest receives extensive newspaper coverage but in very negative terms (UKIP_news1; UKIP_news2; UKIP_news3), while their claim about the "stitch-up" of Schultz' election to President of the European Parliament is supported by the media (UKIP_news2; UKIP_news4).

4.4   THE UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY: FARAGE'S POST-REFERENDUM 'VICTORY SPEECH' IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 28 JUNE 2016

As the vote counts come in on the eve of referendum night, 23 June 2016, a downbeat Farage addresses the press in a short speech, seemingly recognising defeat with the words "I'm not conceding, but…" (Bloom and Williams, 2016). Within hours, however, events take an unexpected turn. It becomes evident that the British public have voted to leave the EU. As the face of the Leave.eu campaign, Farage again addresses his

campaign party and the press. This time his performance is rather more jubilant and upbeat as he triumphantly announces the UK's "independence day" to a cheering audience (rtrumble, 2016) in tones that are more evocative of the Tom Cruise film than the historical event in the US. He picks up on this trope again in his first speech in an institutional setting. This takes place in the European Parliament during an emergency plenary on 28 June 2016 (UKIP_live1), called to discuss the controversial results of the UK referendum. Farage takes to the limelight, knowing that, for once, his EP performance will reach a domestic audience that includes not only the British media but also his constituents.

Ukip leader Nigel Farage meets European Union Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker ahead of a plenary session at the EU headquarters in Brussels on June 28, 2016

FIGURE 4.9: *The Daily Mail* pictures Juncker's meeting with Farage in their coverage of the event (UKIP_news5). Copyright: AFP/Getty Images.

As MEPs arrive for the session, Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, sarcastically air kisses Farage in European fashion to congratulate him on the referendum results. The plenary session begins and Juncker immediately raises a laugh from the audience at Farage's expense as he addresses Farage directly in his speech, "I am really surprised you are here... Why are you here?" MEPs representing

each of the groups in the EP speak in turn. Finally, it is the moment everyone has been waiting for: it is Farage's turn to speak. With his faithful Union Jack stuck with a rubber sucker to his desk, Farage starts his speech and is instantly greeted by heckling and jeering from the chamber. "You're not laughing now, are you?" he retorts. He clearly delights in his own ability to provoke the live audience of MEPs and effect their vocal and gestural reaction throughout his speech. Chair Martin Schultz is forced to interrupt proceedings several times in attempts to calm the audience and to admonish Farage for accusing the MEPs in the chamber of never having done "a proper job in your lives". Farage fully observes official protocol, if not norms, during these interruptions, a bemused smile playing on his lips as Schultz admonishes the chamber not to behave "like UKIP". These provocations by Farage, alongside Juncker's teasing, are the subjects of the next morning's headlines (UKIP_news5; UKIP_news6; UKIP_news7; UKIP_news8; UKIP_news9; UKIP_news10; UKIP_news11) and of the relatively limited Twitter debate that engages with the live event. Farage leaves the chamber shortly after his own speech is finished to do an interview with Sky News, which he then tweets with the comment "they were pleased to see me as you can tell" (UKIP_tweet6). This soon becomes the most retweeted tweet in relation to the event.

4.5   THE UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY: FARAGE'S SPEECH IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON TRUMP'S TRAVEL BAN, 1 FEBRUARY 2017

Since Donald Trump's election as President of the US, Farage has become known as the link between the UK and the newly instated US President, having made several visits to Trump Tower and appeared at one of Trump's campaign rallies. Trump imposes a travel ban on entry into the US for nationals from seven countries known for links to terrorism. This sparks a major international reaction, and the EP discuss the ban in a plenary session on 1 February 2017. Farage engages extensively with the topic of Trump's travel ban in the days leading up to the plenary. He is frequently invited to appear in the media as the most prominent voice supporting Trump, while most of the British political establishment condemns the ban.

During the debate in the EP (UKIP_live4), Farage is repeatedly met by catcalls from his fellow MEPs and responds in several speeches by indignantly criticising the house for a lack of democracy and open-mindedness. In his main speech, he contrasts the lack of representative democracy in the EP with Trump's "genuine democracy". Less than a minute into Farage's main speech, President of the EP Antonio Tajani interrupts to admonish him, asking him to show "institutional respect to the Commission". Farage confronts him head on, pointing his finger at the President, replying that he will show "institutional respect to the truth".

As the camera within the chamber pans back to Farage, its angle is widened to show UK Labour MEP Seb Dance sitting immediately behind Farage, holding a handwritten sign saying "He's lying to you" with an arrow pointing to Farage. As Farage continues his speech, an official walks over to Seb Dance holding the sign and they have a whispered conversation. Seb Dance keeps up his sign during most of Farage's speech, during which Farage suggests that the EP invite Trump to visit. Although Farage is interviewed on Fox News that evening about his views on Trump (which he later tweets, (UKIP_tweet7)), both the discussion on Twitter and coverage of the event in British legacy media entirely focus on Dance's sign, which dominates all headlines and images in articles on Farage's speech (UKIP_news12; UKIP_news13; UKIP_news14; UKIP_news15).

FIGURE 4.10: *The Guardian*'s front page (UKIP_news16) the morning after the event features as its main image Seb Dance's sign behind Farage and a column by Seb Dance inside the paper. Copyright Guardian Newspapers, 2 February 2017.

4.6 THE UK INDEPENDENCE PARTY: FARAGE'S SPEECH IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON THE TRIGGERING OF ARTICLE 50, 5 APRIL 2017

On 29 March 2017 Theresa May triggers Article 50, starting the two-year time limit for negotiations for the UK to leave the EU. This move also triggers a plenary in the EP in which the negotiation and withdrawal process between the UK and the EU is discussed and voted on. In the days that follow, Farage invokes the national symbol of the British passport in his comments on the historical event, both on Twitter and in his LBC radio show (UKIP_tweet8; UKIP_radio1). In the same media, he sets the scene for a dramatic event in the EP, warning that "Sparks will fly". In preparation for the EP plenary, UKIP

and the EFDD Group[22] motion for resolutions relating to Gibraltar and immigration to be tabled and voted on in the plenary (UKIP_press8; UKIP_tweet9).

FIGURE 4.11: Farage glances at the camera as he starts to speak in the EP before he turns back to address the Chair and his fellow MEPs (UKIP_live2). Credit: European Parliament, 5 April 2017.

Farage speaks in the EP early in the morning (UKIP_live2). As he is about to start his talk, he briefly glances at the camera that broadcasts his speech to the wider audience. In his speech he establishes the democratic nature of the UK's decision to leave the EU, in contrast to the practices of the EU and EP, which he calls "unreasonable" and "impossible" with the aim of destroying nation state democracy. His speech has a moral overtone and calls for sensible and adult behaviour from the EP. Farage is interrupted by the EP President after a few minutes and admonished for comparing his fellow MEPs to "the mafia". As he resumes, Farage sarcastically corrects himself on the grounds of having been culturally insensitive to the Italian EP President and changes it to "gangsters". Cheers and jeers ensue. Farage goes on to argue for tariff-free trade and warns his MEP colleagues of more countries wanting to leave if they continue to put the interests of the EU above that of their citizens by refusing the UK the trade deal they want.

Paul Nuttall speaks in the plenary debate a little later about the role of Gibraltar in the negotiations for the UK to leave the EU and suggests that Gibraltar should be given

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[22] EFDD – Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy – is the political group in the European Parliament that UKIP participates in. Nigel Farage is their president.

MPs in the British Parliament. This topic also dominates a column by Farage in the *Daily Telegraph* (UKIP_col2) the same morning, and Farage describes it as a red line in a second comment to the EP. He then accuses Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, of not acting in good neighbourliness in relation to Gibraltar and complains about the 52 billion pounds settlement payment demanded by a resolution tabled by Guy Verhofstadt, Leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, as unreasonable. Voting then takes place in the EP on Verhofstadt's resolution, UKIP's amendments and various other motions relating to the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Verhofstadt's resolution is adopted and UKIP's amendments dismissed. UKIP later complain that British Labour MEPs betrayed the country by voting against UKIP's motions (UKIP_press5; UKIP_press9).

5. THE MEANING OF THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO POPULISM AS AN IDEOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As ideologies go, populism is not particularly coherent or specific. As I noted in chapter two, this has raised some objections in the literature to the classification. Yet, despite its thinness, it is an ideology that communicates well as the meaning it constructs is approachable and consistent with popular myths about democracy and the nature of representation. These characteristics lie partly in the performance of populist ideology, which I explore in chapters seven and eight. But they are also inherent in the very meaning and structure of populist ideology itself. In this chapter I develop a conceptual approach that can form a basis for empirical analysis to answer the question, **how is populist ideology constructed through communicative processes?** I build on the introduction and chapter two, where I defined populism as an ideology consisting of the concepts of sovereignty, the people, the elite and the populist and noted its relational nature that establishes the strong connection between the populist representative and the people that populism is so famous for. This relationship is established through communicative processes. To address the above question, I therefore concern myself with the ways in which ideologies become observable through discourses and performances and the mutually constitutive and integral nature of this process. This is a matter of the relationship between form and content in the formation of meaning that I engaged with in chapter two. In other words, the meaning of populist ideology is shaped by its process of communication; the semantics of its constituent concepts are shaped by the pragmatics of their performance. I gradually elaborate on this theme in this and the following chapters as it relates to both ideology and performance theory where these are inextricably intertwined. As far as it is possible to analytically separate them, for now I concentrate on the former.

In order to develop a perspective on populist communication that encompasses the concept of populist ideology, its manifestation in political performance and the ways in which this manifestation contributes to meaning-making, I adjust the populism literature's usual approach to ideology. I posit that a shift in emphasis from the

populism canon's structural focus to the communicative properties of ideology explicates this process of meaning-making, while it also resolves the charges that are raised in the literature against the classification of populism as ideology. To develop this perspective, I explore relevant ideology theory: structural approaches that aim to understand the conceptual content of ideologies and their architecture, and process-oriented approaches that are concerned with what causes such beliefs to be the ones subscribed to and what effects they have on the social world (Humphrey, 2005, pp. 242–3; Maynard, 2013, p. 301). I first engage with the well-established notion of populism as a thin ideology and the factors of host ideology and context in the formation of its concepts. I then consider the cause and strength of this thinness in the bottom-up character of populist ideology as formed according to popular conceptions of politics and democracy rather than intricate elite systems of belief. I move on to consider the constitut*ive* nature of populist claims, alongside their constitut*ed* character. This in turn leads to a discussion of the epistemological foundations of the representative claim that populism offers. The chapter ends with a discussion of the nature of the ideological cleavage that populism constructs in the political spectrum.

5.2   THE STRUCTURE OF POPULIST IDEOLOGY

In ideology theory, we can draw a distinction between structural and process-oriented approaches, although many variants exist within these (indeed, Eagleton lists 16 alternative definitions (1991, pp. 1–2)). Structural approaches focus on a number of neutral, descriptive aspects of political ideologies. They consider, for instance, the *internal* structure of ideologies as systems of beliefs, such as which core and peripheral political values constitute a given ideology (Freeden, 1998a). Other structural approaches focus on the relations *between* ideologies, such as the left-right dimension (Bobbio, 1996). And others again are concerned with the *hierarchical ordering* of levels of abstraction of political thought, from abstract logical and coherent belief systems, through issues, policy and concrete political action, to the personal qualities of candidates (Converse, 1964a). In other words, such structural approaches are chiefly concerned with describing and mapping systems of belief. In the populism literature, all definitions of populism as an ideology are based on Freeden's (1998a) conceptual

morphology approach to the internal structure of ideology, including Wirth et al.'s (2016) definition adapted and applied in chapter two.

Freeden's approach forms a starting point for understanding how the ideational structure of populism relates to meaning-formation. However, it chiefly addresses the non-communicative aspects of the relationship between content and form. That is, it considers how mental representations adapt their meaning to other concepts contained within the architecture of an ideology but not how this meaning is constructed and changed through communicative processes. This in turn creates a rather rigid insistence on coherence that is rarely found in empirical expressions of ideologies. In the following sections I therefore also explore more process-oriented approaches to ideology to address the communication-related aspect of meaning formation. Such approaches are more preoccupied with the exercise and attainment of power, how an ideology emerges, and how it is performed and reinforced through representations by particular social groups and institutions. These approaches thus engage more with communicative processes. First, however, I consider a useful aspect of Freeden's approach, namely the way in which it conceives of "ideology [as] located at the meeting point between meaning and form" (1998a, p. 54). By 'form' Freeden here refers to the internal structural configuration of political concepts in a given ideology, which he describes as "a communicable and action-inspiring pattern" (ibid.). I argue that, in populism's bid for communicability, it places 'the people' and their sovereignty at its structural core. This has consequences for the assignation of meaning to populism's other core and peripheral concepts, which in turn inform the construction of populism's ideological narrative.

5.2.1 POPULISM'S THINNESS

As I have already briefly noted in chapter two, Freeden's conceptual morphology is concerned with mapping the internal composition of ideologies as constituted of a range of core and peripheral political concepts. This approach helps us identify the conceptual structure and content of populism. Thin ideologies such as populism have a restricted morphology consisting of relatively few core political concepts. They lack some of the concepts usually present in most 'thick' ideologies, such as liberty and justice. Thin ideologies cover less conceptual ground and often attach themselves to a

'host' ideology to achieve fullness and be able to compete against other ideologies. They are also less coherent in the way that they bind together the concepts that do constitute them. In Converse's classical treatise on voters' perceptions of ideological differentiation, he makes a similar distinction between narrow-range and mainstream ideologies. The latter consist of a wide range of objects of belief (1964b, p. 4) that are built on "vast treasuries of well organized information among elites" (ibid., p. 10). In other words, thick ideologies are systematically constructed by elites; thin ideologies are not necessarily so. This is an important point that relates to the formation of meaning within populist ideology and that I return to shortly.

According to Freeden (1998a), an ideology's core concepts are "decontested" (given definite meaning in a given socio-political environment) through their association with each other in a particular ideological composition, with competing ideologies, and with specific social contexts. That is, meaning is situationally constructed. In the case of thin ideologies, their relatively few core concepts form different interpretive paths depending on the social context and the thick ideology that a thin ideology may attach itself to in parasitical fashion (Mudde and Rovira Kaltwasser, 2013, p. 498). The core concepts of populism are thus also decontested in relation to each other and to a potential host ideology; meaning is constructed in response to factors both internal and external to an ideology. Further, Freeden explains decontestation in relation to external social context through his notion of "cultural adjacency": the "specific internal formation [of concepts in an ideology] is shaped by what is here referred to as culture: temporally and spatially bounded social practices, institutional patterns, ethical systems, technologies, influential theories, discourses, and beliefs" (Freeden, 1998a, pp. 69–70). The structural formation of core and peripheral concepts and their culturally contingent decontestation thus co-contribute to meaning-formation. In the context of populism, this approach becomes useful when considering the question of how institutional context and political culture shape the meaning of core populist concepts. It therefore lends itself to comparative study.

Coherence of an ideology's internal structure and various interpretive paths may indeed enhance its communicability as discussed above. Yet when we consider the complex process of (necessarily mediated) communication in the modern world – from

mental representation, via language, institutional and technological mediation, to reception and interpretation – the link between meaning and form as explicated by Freeden needs to be developed further in relation to the communication of ideology. In particular, I suggest taking into consideration the perhaps more tangible yet much more complex communic*ated*, rather than communic*able*, form of ideology. In a communication perspective, then, I integrate structural approaches and their focus on the architecture of ideas with theory that can explain the processes of meaning formation that are inherent to communication itself: the processes of anchoring ideas in discourse and of their mediation. In doing so, I find that it is not only the coherence of thick, mainstream ideologies that is "communicable and action-inspiring", as Freeden suggests. Thin ideologies like populism find vehicles other than coherence to achieve these ends.

Before I return to this point in the following section, it is worth bringing up a concern recently raised by Freeden himself (2016). He questions whether the very thinness of populism – its lack of position on so many core political questions – disqualifies it as a thin ideology (see also Aslanidis, 2016, pp. 90–1 for a strong argument on this point). Further, not only does populism lack comprehensiveness; it also lacks specificity in what it *does* cover. On the other hand, Freeden deliberates, populism does tick a lot of other boxes that would mark it as a successful ideology on its own terms: it can easily be consumed by its intended audiences and make an impact, it displays imagination and creativity in the attractive ordering of its ideas, and so on. Note that these ideological qualities of populism that Freeden enumerates are all process-oriented: they relate to populism's ability to communicate. Freeden concludes that, in structural terms, populism may be a new and unfamiliar genre of ideology that is "amorphous, sporadic and truncated" (2016). He also notes, however, that approaches to ideology that regard its function as one of dissimulation and mythologising may better describe populism – that is, approaches that focus on process-oriented aspects of ideology, on how it is constructed and communicated. As I argue below, the integration of such approaches also resolves Freeden's concern with populism's lack of specificity.

5.2.2 POPULISM AS A MASS IDEOLOGY

As we have just seen, populism's thinness explains part of its malleability but is also considered conceptually problematic by some critics. I now progress through an argument that seeks to integrate Freeden's structural perspective on ideology with processual elements. I find that the answer to the issue of excessive thinness lies in populism's communicability. I start by considering Converse's distinction between ideology as constructed and espoused by elites and as understood by mass publics. The first part of his famous dictum "*what goes with what* and why" (1964b, p. 9, my emphasis) accounts for the coherence of mainstream ideologies. His survey-based study demonstrates that, in the case of thick (wide-range, in Converse's terms), coherent mainstream ideologies, only fragments of such belief systems trickle down to mass publics whose perception of the belief system is much less coherent and extensive (Converse, 1964b, pp. 11–12). This discrepancy between projection and reception highlights the need to account for both elite construction and public reception and interpretation in the communication of ideology. From the perspective of mass publics, then, the lack of coherence and specificity and the narrower range of objects present in populist ideology are not necessarily perceived as such compared to their perceptions of mainstream ideologies. In fact, Converse found lower levels of ideological differentiation and perceived coherence in lower socioeconomic groups of voters; and studies on populism indicate that these lower educated and less politically efficacious groups are exactly the ones that constitute the populist voter base (Bos et al., 2013; Reinemann et al., 2016b, p. 383). This demographic is less likely to distinguish between differing levels of coherence and specificity in thin and mainstream ideologies.

In order to account for populism's grip on its subjects, the lack of *structural* coherence and fullness in the case of populism's core and peripheral concepts must, by necessity, be resolved *through process.* The communicative construction of populist ideology lends it coherence in the eyes of mass publics (to adopt Converse's terminology). In contrast, mainstream (elite) ideologies' reliance on economies of communication – for instance, the extensive but relatively coherent set of values associated with the word 'conservative' – leave behind the majority of voters (Converse, 1964b). The question is

then how such communicative construction works – how does populist communication lend perceived coherence to its thin ideology and grip its supporters?

The latter part of Converse's dictum – "what goes with what *and why*" – is in this respect populism's core strength. Converse argues that the 'why' is more difficult to communicate to the public, given its complexity. Mainstream ideologies therefore rarely manage to get across this message to non-elite voters. Instead, "visible social groupings come to play [the role of]... objects of high centrality in the belief systems of the less well informed" (Converse, 1964b, p. 38). Populists capitalise on this feature of low ideological comprehension and perception by mass publics by explicitly placing such visible social groupings at the structural centre of their belief system in the form of an antagonistic relationship between elite and people. They project what will be received. Using visible social groups as scapegoats through strategies of blame attribution (Hameleers et al., 2017), populists then construct the 'why' of their ideology bottom-up, that is, based on mass publics' perceptions of central objects of beliefs. 'The people' – and their inverse definition in relation to 'the elite' – are constructed as the reason behind the populist belief system.

In this sense, populist ideology's conceptual structure – its thin conceptual morphology and its relation to other ideologies in the traditional spectrum – is moulded on communicative effectiveness. Its starting point is not that of an elite ideology with a complex set of constraints that are difficult, if not impossible, to communicate coherently to a lay public and therefore serves to dislodge elite conceptions of society from those of citizens. Instead populism starts from the premise of the mass public. Populists identify situationally relevant visible social groupings and build their (quasi-)logic (Converse, 1964b, p. 7) from this foundation. This notion of populism as a mass ideology may explain the frequent popular use of the term *populist* in the sense of *popular* or *crowd-pleasing*, but it also explains its more substantive content and its appeal. Further, it demonstrates Block and Negrine's observation that "the populist communication style is much more than a mere top-down appeal because... it embodies more complex identity affiliations and emotional interplay between populist actors and their publics" (2017, p. 182). This bottom-up approach to ideological construction not only gives populism a much greater reach beyond elite audiences but

also enables it to communicate the 'why' of its ideology, which in turn gives it communicative power.

Converse argues,

> A realistic picture of political belief systems in the mass public, then, is not one that omits issues and policy demands completely nor one that presumes widespread ideological coherence; it is rather one that captures with some fidelity the fragmentation, narrowness, and diversity of these demands. (1964b, p. 54).

This description of received ideology corresponds closely to Freeden's (2016) above-mentioned analysis of populist forms of ideology as "amorphous, sporadic and truncated": unlike mainstream ideologies, mass publics' perceptions of ideology are captured in populism's actual structure. In other words, populism can be classified as a bottom-up mass belief system rather than an elite belief system. This explains its structural thinness and lack of coherence. Indeed, a mass ideology is exactly what populism claims to be: its representative claim corresponds to its structure.

5.3   THE POLITICAL FUNCTION OF POPULIST IDEOLOGY

Let us explore this populist representative claim in a little more detail. I have argued that Freeden and Converse's perspectives both see ideology as socially constructed. In chapter two, I started to outline an approach that acknowledged both the socially constructed and the constitutive nature of communication in the process of political representation. This approach invites the analysis of how populism attains and practices the power to represent its ideology as common sense. This is a process of decontestation that is carried out by political actors. However, on the basis of Freeden and Converse's approaches, we are as yet unable to account for the constitutive nature of populist ideology and the ways in which the assignation of meaning is affected by discursive form. To address this aspect of ideology, I turn to discourse-oriented ideology theory that better lends itself to the analysis of political actors' attempts at meaning construction geared towards the media's role in circulating, shaping, reinforcing and/or contesting such meanings.

Van Dijk's (2016) discourse-oriented theory of ideology, for example, describes ideologies as mental representations shared by social collectivities (ibid., p. 1). To return to Hall ([1997]2013, pp. 3–4) and the conceptual framework outlined in chapter two, this process is one of representation. Mental concepts help us interpret material reality in a meaningful way as they form part of a system of representation. These mental concepts are in turn represented through language. The representative work of ideologies that political actors undertake as they empirically manifest concepts in the world through signs and symbols is both political and communicative. This is because "ideologies are formed and reproduced [through] …social practices such as discourse and communication" (Van Dijk, 2016, p. 5). This is useful to explain populism's ideological mechanisms of constructing meaning and representing it as 'truth'. It enables me to query the process of representative claim-making, which mediates the mental representations of ideology through performance.

5.3.1 THE CONSTITUTIVE FUNCTION OF POPULIST IDEOLOGY

The above argument that populism can be conceived as a mass ideology suggests that it is grounded in people's lived experiences and social practices. These are indeed inherent aspects of the mutually constitutive relationship between ideological content and their communicated form. The dual function of discourse in the construction of identity follows immediately from this: the performative qualities of ideology are both based on and bring into being such social practices and identities. Ideology is "concerned less with the situation 'as it is' than with the production of certain useful effects for political purposes" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 29). In Austin's terms, ideological discourse belongs to the class of speech acts – performatives – "that get something done… rather than to the discourse of description" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 19). The mechanisms of such performative identity construction work, for example, by incarnating a particular and specific political measure into something with a different and more generalised meaning that constructs the identity of the community as a coherent whole (Laclau, 1997, p. 303). For instance, a populist party's representative claim may portray a particular immigration policy as a means of emancipation from elite domination and achieving sovereignty for the silent majority. In the process of making this claim, it constructs 'the people' as a whole and legitimate entity through a process of exclusion of 'the others' and the elite. According to Laclau, "[t]here is

ideology whenever a particular content shows itself as more than itself… what an ideological distortion projects on a particular object is the impossible fullness of the community" (ibid.).

The process described by Laclau is closely related to the discussion above of populism being constructed as a mass ideology. For the bottom-up construction of populist ideology occurs on the basis of 'the people' being defined in negative terms through blame attribution against visible social groupings. Yet the constitution of a social identity through the invocation of 'the people' as an empty signifier is the inverse process of that denoted by the notion of mass ideology. It forms the constitutive, rather than the constituted, side of the dual function of discourse in identity construction. I noted above that some structural approaches to ideology argue that populism's lack of specificity disqualifies it as an ideology. However, this mechanism of replacing the specific with an ambiguous and generalised social identity is exactly what constitutes ideological meaning-making in processual terms. In populism, specificity and particularity are replaced by the evocation of 'the people' as an empty construction. This process of communication therefore explains the lack of specificity in populism's thinness. Moreover, the mechanism of making a particular measure equivalent with the community as a coherent whole is essentially a performative process. It demonstrates how inherent performative devices are to the ideological process of meaning-making. I explore this aspect of representation further in chapters seven and eight.

Along with its constitutive function, discourse provides the rationale for an ideology. Access to this function of discourse, argues Van Dijk (2016, pp. 9–10), is usually reserved for elites in politics, education and the media who provide more abstract legitimation for, and coherence of, an ideology. As argued above, however, populism as a mass ideology grounds its rationale – the 'why' of populism – in visible social groupings that are easily identifiable by mass publics (Converse, 1964b, p. 38). Instead of developing attitudes into a more abstract and coherent system, this type of grounding serves to reinforce a polarised Us-Them identity construction between the people and the elite that takes lived experience as its starting point, or at least claims to do so. The EFF, for instance, visibly highlight their contrast to the elite by wearing

their red domestic workers' uniforms in parliament (see, for example, Figures 4.4 and 4.5), and Farage is frequently pictured with a pint of bitter in the pub. Both parties' populism is also made more communicable by their horizontal forms of polarisation that, like their anti-elitism, are based on visible social groupings, such as the EFF's exclusion of whites and UKIP's demonisation of immigrants. Such polarisation is in turn reinforced by culturally specific decontestation (Freeden, 1998a) as populists make use of socially shared myths and symbols in their construction of who 'the people' are (and are not).

Populists legitimise their ideology as an 'ideology of the people' in their representative claim, and, I argued above, justly so. They can therefore justify their claims by reference to 'common sense'. I have already explored the first part of this claim of being an ideology of the people, which is based on the epistemological position of knowledge as socially constructed. I now turn to its justification – the common sense of populist ideology. Populists' self-representation as the source of common sense, however, implies their occupation of the territory of objective truth. I find that this is inherently contradictory with the notion of an ideology of the people as it sees knowledge not as socially constructed but insists on the existence of objective truth. Yet, as I have also suggested, epistemological contradictions in the construction of populist ideology are in fact not a problem for populism, as such inconsistencies are not discerned by its constituents.

5.3.2 Populist ideology's claim to objective truth

Populism's representation of its ideology as common sense rests on a claim to epistemological privilege, which it shares with false consciousness approaches to ideology. It is a claim that is ideologically constituted in and of itself. In other words, what I now turn to is populism's claim *about* ideology, while I have already explored how such claims are ideologically and communicatively constructed. I attempt to take populists' claims about politics and ideology at face value and then to query their epistemological foundation. To do so I engage with more critical approaches to the concept of ideology and in the course of this also further clarify my own position. To reiterate, the conception of ideology that I have developed here does not see ideology as a false consciousness. But the populist worldview does.

The neutral but analytically useful approach to ideology that I developed above is an inclusive one in that it conceives of ideolog*ies* as plural and competing phenomena. Many critical approaches, in contrast, tend to be restrictive as they hone in on what they consider to be particularly problematic social phenomena (Humphrey, 2005, p. 231). To Thompson (1984, p. 4), for example, studying ideology "…is to study the ways in which meaning (or signification) serves to sustain relations of domination". Thompson here restricts his definition of ideology to *dominant* phenomena. By implication, he also conceives of ideology in the singular. Thompson's and similar Marxism-inspired approaches are geared towards answering questions on the media's role in constructing consent to structural inequalities through processes of naturalisation (Downey et al., 2014; Hall, 2001). While such perspectives address related questions to a communication approach to populism – questions of the mechanisms of ideological power – their restriction to dominant forms of political power as objects of analysis is not broadly applicable to populism and I therefore do not adopt them here.

Populism's own view of ideology is different, however. Populism positions itself in an antagonistic relationship to the elite as one homogenous and dominant force; populism has no need for pluralist differentiation. Its people-centrism and anti-elitism are vehicles of a narrative that sets out the populist project as in fact seeking to undo "relations of domination", as per Thompson's account of ideology. In this sense, populists themselves present a pejorative, critical conception of ideology in their representative claim to describe the supposed domination of the elite (and, as part of it, the media) and how it seeks to control the people. Their claim is concerned with the elite's obfuscation of social reality (Eagleton, 1991, pp. 5–6). In proponing this claim, however, they also assume that there is such a thing as 'objective reality' for the elite to obfuscate; they conceive of ideology as standing in opposition to 'truth'. Further, they assume that the critic (in this case the populist) is able to occupy this objective ground in the analysis that they present to the people. In their ideological representation of the dominant elite's quest to control the people, populists are then employing a false consciousness approach to ideology that implies the existence of objective truth. Moreover, they claim to occupy this epistemologically privileged ground themselves. And they do so whilst simultaneously making the contradictory

claim that such truth equates to common sense, which resides in the people. When we consider the populist claim to truth as an ideological representation in and of itself, it becomes a means of lending a fictitious coherence to populist identity and to 'the people'.

Yet, as I (unlike populists) have adopted a non-pejorative attitude to ideology, I do not necessarily assume an intention to mislead on behalf of populists and must consider ideology a necessary and ubiquitous phenomenon: without ideology's "fictitious fixing of meaning there would not be meaning at all" (Laclau, 1997, p. 302). I thus retain a critical stance that questions the mechanisms of meaning-formation within populist ideology whilst avoiding a claim to objective truth and accepting my own analysis as intra-ideological. Such an approach is consistent with a view of discourse as both constitutive of, and conditioned by, society. It recognises its role as an intervention aimed at liberating people from beliefs considered harmful to themselves, presenting alternatives rather than truth (Humphrey, 2005, p. 235). Conceiving of ideology as necessary and unavoidable (Laclau, 1997, p. 300) rather than as simply bad, I then retain an analytical focus on the "production of certain useful effects for political purposes" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 29) and on Hall's and Van Dijk's representational means of doing so (Hall, [1997]2013, pp. 3–4; Van Dijk, 2016, p. 1).

This position follows Laclau in his reformulation of the notion of 'distortion' in a non-pejorative way. Distortion, he argues, works by constituting a new meaning, which is then represented as 'truth' (Laclau, 1997, p. 301). This constitutive function of ideology is part of 'the work of representation' (Hall, [1997]2013). The process of representation concerns itself with the communicated form of ideology, where Freeden's (1998a) notion of the decontestation of the political concepts that constitute an ideology concerns their communi*cable* form. Yet in the service of ideology this work of representation is not restricted to constructing definitions of abstract political concepts; it is specifically aimed at constructing social identities: "ideologies typically represent who we are, what we do, why we do it, how we (should or should not) do it, and what we do it for, that is, our social identity, actions, goals, norms and values, resources, and interests" (Van Dijk, 2016, p. 2). In other words, populist ideology manifests itself in a representative claim that establishes a

specifically populist notion of its constituents as suppressed by the ideology of a dominant elite. As a discursive construction, ideology is then concerned with "conflicts within the field of signification" (Eagleton, 1991, p. 11) of social identities.

5.4 DISCUSSION: THE POPULIST CLEAVAGE

I now take a step back and return to Converse's distinction between public perceptions of ideological differentiation and elite constructions of complex belief systems and to the notion of populism as a mass ideology based on the former. From this perspective, the current success of populism around the world is a sign that the gap between mainstream elite ideologies and the public's understanding of them is broadening. As politics in turn responds to this gap, Stavrakakis (2014, p. 505) even suggests that the traditional liberal-conservative cleavage that Converse's study is based on is being replaced by a populism-antipopulism cleavage as the most dominant one in politics today[23]. Based on his study of Peronism, Ostiguy (2009) also identifies a corresponding low-high cleavage in politics that cuts across the left-right spectrum while Norris and Inglehart (2018) conceptualise a populist–pluralist cleavage. In describing the low–high cleavage, Ostiguy mixes together stylistic elements – "ways of being and acting in politics" (2009, p. 5) – with ideological elements – attitudes to democracy and to the people's participation in politics. Norris and Inglehart similarly define populism as a style but oppose it to the ideological notion of pluralism in their cleavage. Although such stylistic and ideological elements are indeed intertwined in political reality, retaining a conceptual distinction has analytical advantages, as I have already noted in chapter two.

I therefore adopt Ostiguy's quadrant model of a populism-antipopulism cleavage that cuts across the left-right spectrum (Figure 5.1). However, I identify this as a purely ideological differentiation in the political spectrum, even if it empirically manifests itself stylistically and performatively. In this cleavage, populism on the one hand is associated with a homogenous representation of the people in opposition to the elite and as embodying common sense and objective truth. Antipopulism, on the other hand, is associated with a heterogeneous representation of the people that includes

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[23] Stavrakakis' study and argument concentrates on southern Europe but can, I believe, be extended to populism generally.

the elite and where the role of the elite is to represent the people's best interests on the basis of their expertise. This cleavage, then, is concerned with vertical and horizontal relationships to 'the people' and with different modes of and claims to political representation. It explains populism's famous, but conceptually problematic, resistance to traditional ideological cleavages (Germani, 1978, p. 88; Giglioli, 2013, p. 34; Ostiguy, 2009) by mixing elements from both the left and the right. For, as I have argued, so does its voting public, many of whom do not perceive this inconsistency. For this reason, studies that define populism as an ideology according to the classical unidimensional tradition of ideology theory may miss more relevant and urgent cleavages, both within populism and in the political spectrum overall. For the same reason, scholarship that channels studies into left-wing and right-wing subtypes of populism can be difficult to generalise to populism overall as they may say more about the left- or right-wing host ideology than about the phenomenon of populism itself.
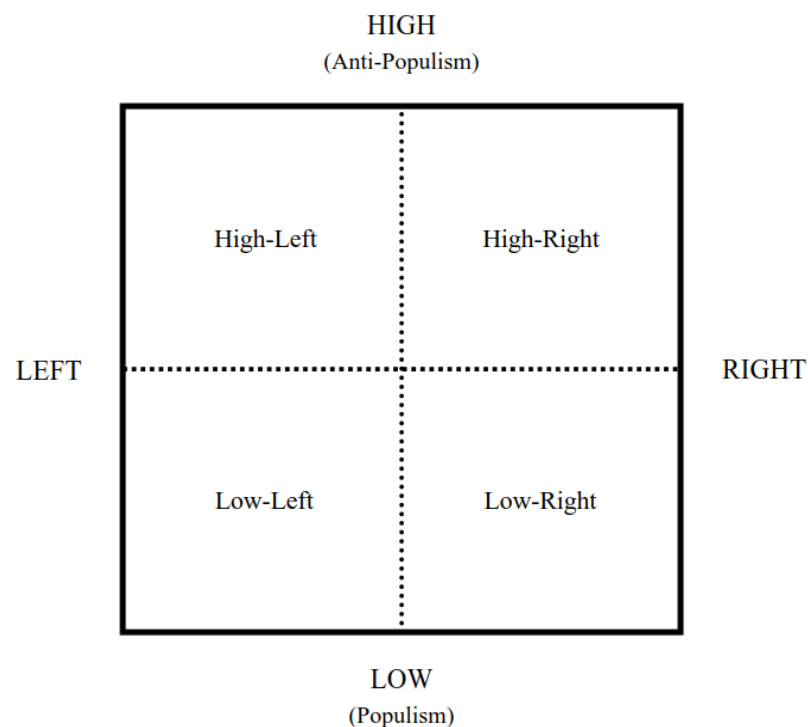
FIGURE 5.1: Ostiguy's two-dimensional political space of positions and appeals (2009, p. 17)

Populism breaks down and re-erects traditional ideological structures – internally by founding its conceptual morphology on mass perceptions, and externally in its relation to other ideologies by constituting new cleavages in the traditional ideological

spectrum. It thereby also subverts the normative hierarchy of some strands of ideology theory that dictate that ideology is an expression of 'high' politics while rhetoric and political style are 'low' or base forms of politics (Corner and Pels, 2003, p. 2; Laclau, 2005a, chap. 1). Indeed, Converse's study described above is based on such an assumption, assigning the personal qualities of candidates and their rhetorical abilities to the bottom rung of a ladder of abstraction and, by implication, ideological sophistication. I posit that, while it is necessary to analytically separate ideology and performance in the conceptualisation of populist communication, we must also acknowledge that style, rhetoric and performance – means of communicating ideology – do not exist in an either-or dichotomous relationship with ideology. Process-oriented approaches to ideology clarify this intertwined relationship.

From this perspective, populism as an ideology constructs a social identity through the invocation of 'the people' as an empty signifier. But populism uses different mechanisms of identity construction from mainstream ideologies. Traditional ideological cleavages centre around the systematic but complex economies of communication inherent in mainstream ideologies, for instance on the meanings of 'liberal' and 'conservative', which are understood by mainly elite voters (Converse, 1964b). The populist cleavage, in contrast, replaces these abstract systems with objects of high centrality to mass publics, such as visible social groupings and culturally shared background symbols and imaginaries, which are then used to form representative claims and thereby constitute broad social identities. This results in polarisation between the elite and the people – and between populism and all mainstream ideologies – as populism constructs its narrative of elites imposing a false consciousness on the silent majority to serve their own selfish purposes at the expense of good, ordinary people. The cleavage is therefore also morally constituted rather than reliant on differentiated contestations of central political concepts.

Populists can then represent themselves as being in a unique position to unveil the truth as they claim to occupy the only objective ground in the political spectrum characterised by the populism-antipopulism cleavage. The constructed nature of these representations directs attention to the aesthetic and performative dimensions of populist ideology when conceived as a process. Since these populist mechanisms of

identity construction – stylistic as well as conceptual – tap into mass publics' means of appreciating politics, their claim to be an 'ideology of the people' is perceived as authentic. This perspective, then, highlights the central role of representation in a communication approach to populism; representing the people in political terms, and representing the people and the antagonism between the people and the elite in discursive terms. Populism plays with the intersection of these two meanings of representation that I outlined in chapter two and is in itself a particular mode of (antagonistic) representation.

Let me sum up. I have explored ideology theory for the purpose of developing an approach that can explain how populist ideology is constructed through communicative processes. In my approach to ideology, I have shifted the focus from the structural approaches traditionally used to classify populism as an ideology onto processes of communication. Such a conceptualisation looks beyond ideology as a mental construct with a given internal structure and concerns itself with how ideology comes about and plays out. In other words, it conceives of ideology as both socially constructed and as constitutive. These are the communicative processes through which ideology interacts with its context. Such an approach necessitates a breaking down of existing dichotomies of ideology and performance and of content and form. My communication approach to populist ideology is thereby informed by the conceptual framework of meaning-making through processes of representation that I developed in chapter two.

More specifically, the process-oriented approach to populist ideology that I have outlined is, first, inclusive enough to accommodate both dominant and counter-dominant phenomena. Second, it is in and of itself ideologically neutral in its conception of the function of ideology in society, which it sees as one of constructing meaning and (mis-)representing reality through a necessary and unavoidable process. Third, it acknowledges that the analyst of ideology can hold no position of epistemological privilege but rather performs a function of intra-ideological analysis. Fourth, and most importantly to the main question of this study – How can populism be understood and explained from a communication perspective? – it conceives of ideology as developed in a mutually constitutive relationship between mental

representations on the one hand and a materialist dimension on the other as ideologies performatively construct situated social identities through communicative processes. Moreover, the bottom-up construction of logic and coherence of populism's mass ideology highlights the consequent importance that political performance and communication play in imparting meaning. In this sense, the notion of a dichotomy between ideology and performance is antithetical to a communication perspective that considers the mechanisms of the communication of ideology and views ideology and performance as interdependent. It is also incompatible with the notion of populism as a mass ideology that is based on processual – and thus communicative – foundations. My approach is therefore not confined to a definition of ideology as content. Rather, it has gone one step further to consider the representation of content through communication.

6. THE MEANING OF THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM:
EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS[24]

Cape Town, 9 February 2017

Once an accident, twice a coincidence, three times a habit. The EFF's disruption of South Africa's annual State of the Nation Address has by 2017 become almost ritualised; certainly expected; though not sanctioned by all. Yet this year it has been proven *right*. Their calls for President Zuma to #PayBackTheMoney since their first disruption of a parliamentary sitting in August 2014 has been confirmed by a Constitutional Court order. Malema addresses the press upon his party's usual eviction from Parliament:

> It doesn't matter whether they are a majority or not, when they are
> wrong, they are wrong… We are prepared to leave this parliament in a
> coffin, standing for the truth! We are not going to be intimidated by
> soldiers, by police, by criminals… (EFF_conf1)

The EFF are martyrs, and they sacrifice themselves for a moral cause, for the truth. In February 2018, a few days before yet another disruption is about to go off at the 2018 SONA, the final act of the drama plays out: Zuma resigns.

Strasbourg, 28 June 2016

Britain has voted to leave the European Union. Nigel Farage speaks in a European Parliament extraordinary session. This is his moment in the limelight, the culmination of his career. His claim to speak for the silent majority of Britain (nay, of the world!) and to give voice to their central concern of sovereignty has been confirmed:

> It was indeed a seismic result, not just for British politics, for European
> politics, but perhaps even for global politics, too, because what the little
> people did, what the ordinary people did… they rejected big politics,
> and they said, actually, we want our country back… we want to be an
> independent, self-governing normal nation… (UKIP_live1)

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[24] When citing primary data, I do not identify incorrect grammar or spelling with "sic." since the extent of such errors would make this more distracting than the errors themselves.

As he accuses his fellow MEPs of being "in denial", he invites democrats around the world to rejoice. His representation of reality has been confirmed as 'the new normal'.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In UKIP and the EFF's claims above, the elite play a game of dirty politics in which 'politics' is dissociated from democracy. Claims such as these reflect populist ideology. My chief concern in this chapter is the question, **how is populist ideology constructed through communicative processes?** In my approach to this question, I explore two aspects of populist ideological communication: first, the populist representative claim at face value and, second, its construction. In my inductive analysis I used ideology as a sensitising concept to engage with populists' ideological practices. However, ideology also emerged as a concept employed analytically by the populist actors themselves as a means for them to represent the ideological practices of elites. When I explore the claim at face value in this chapter I therefore interrogate the two populist parties' portrayals of the current state of representative democracy and their ideas about what it ought to look like but pay particular attention to the role that they attribute to ideology. I then also analyse this claim as constructed, based on the conception of populist ideology that I developed in the preceding chapter. To put it briefly, I consider populist claims *about* ideology *as* ideological.

In the analysis of populist ideology as a communicative construction I consider its foundation in mass perceptions of politics in combination with the relations between the core concepts that characterise populism. My contention is that, while the populist representative claim at face value differs across different democratic contexts, its social construction through communicative processes is comparable. I thereby also begin to address the question of **how the comparison across different democratic contexts adds to our understanding of populist communication**. Another ideological process that I argue is similar in the two case studies is the constitution of the people as a totality. While I consider this an ideological function I otherwise mostly leave the constitutive aspects of the communication of populist ideology to chapters seven and eight, where I consider the performance of populist ideology. This is, of course, a false dichotomy, as I have argued in chapter two, but it serves an analytical and pragmatic purpose. In this chapter my aim is then to pursue the inner logic of the populist

representative claim when taken at face value and to analyse how this claim is constructed through communicative processes.

The chapter proceeds as follows. I first explore the populist denunciation of politics overall as a dirty, self-referential game that is inward looking and ignores the people it claims to serve. In the populist claim, it is the elite who have polarised Us and Them, not the populists. Yet an analysis of this claim as an ideological construction suggests that a similar antagonism is inherent in populism's own ideological structure that enables them to constitute the people as a totality and speak on behalf of them. I then move on to consider the specific function attributed to ideology in the populist claim but also how this claim simultaneously legitimises populist intervention in mainstream politics. For central to the populist claim is that the elite disguise their true beliefs (or lack of them) behind an obfuscation of reality designed to conceal democratic shortcomings and blind the people to the truth. The populist argument culminates in the claim that only populists have access to the truth and are able to expose the elite's deceptive acts. The role of truth teller involves self-sacrifice, and the martyrdom of the populist is a moral and democratic imperative. Throughout my exploration of these claims, I develop the argument that the relationship between democracy, political value systems and truth in populist representations of the elite and of themselves betray a deeper coherence and logic than otherwise claimed by the literature on populism (see e.g. Aslanidis, 2016; Freeden, 2016; Moffitt, 2016). Yet it brings with it problematic implications for democratic politics, which gradually emerge as we progress through the coming chapters and which I address in the conclusion to this study.

Before I begin, a brief note on the use of the concept of ideology: my foci in this chapter are the populist conceptions of this concept and populists' ideological practices in the process of claim-making. The meanings attributed to the concept by the populist cases are, however, at times reductionist and epistemologically problematic. In developing my own theoretical concept, I do not subscribe to populist conceptions of ideology. Rather, I consider how the uses and meanings of the corresponding populist concept relate to and manifest populist ideology. In the following I use terms such as 'political value system', 'world view' and 'false

consciousness' to denote populist conceptions of ideology, in order to distinguish them from my own use of the word.

6.2 DIRTY POLITICS

Both UKIP's and the EFF's representative claims are based on a portrayal of politics as a dirty game, as strategic manoeuvring for self-serving ends. Their central claim is therefore to do away with the world of dirty politics and reintroduce a purer and truer means of representation. As EFF leader Julius Malema states, "SA, your problems need courageous leadership. A leadership which has interests of the people above self-interest" (EFF_tweet1). The representation of politics as self-interested underlies populists' portrayal of the elite and of their own contrasting role as representatives. In this claim, the mainstream political environment is an elite construction that at once limits populists' ability to act and creates an imperative to do so for the sake of the people. In this section I first develop the argument that the different levels of democratic consolidation and paths to democracy in the two countries lead the populist parties to aim their anti-elitism at different types of targets: in the preceding quote, Malema targets the government's leadership, not the institutions, as UKIP does. Second, I look at how these different sources of 'dirty politics' in the two claims lead the two parties to attribute different meanings to their central promise of sovereignty. Third, these situated meanings of sovereignty are then used by both parties in similar processes of constituting the people as a totality by placing them in a Manichaean relationship with an elite who engage in dirty, undemocratic politics.

6.2.1 ANTI-ELITISM OR ANTI-INSTITUTIONALISM?

The target of UKIP's anti-elitism is both the EU elite and the EU's institutions, and their representation of these changes over time. In 2014 a recurring metaphor for the institution of the European Parliament is that of a school: formalistic, grey and tedious. UKIP's self-representation is then of their MEPs as naughty schoolboys who are ready to shake up the dull proceedings by injecting a bit of fun. The cheeky style of Farage's verbal political cartoon echoes the symbolism of the school metaphor:

> …the avian featured Van Rompuy and the bulldoggish Barroso preside over the new class as austere Headmaster and Deputy at school assembly. But with 24 Union Jacks fluttering on a spread of desks in one corner of the chamber, it was clear who would be the disruptive characters among the amassed. (UKIP_col1)

After the British EU referendum is won, and the proverbial finger-sticking to the EU has become less proverbial, UKIP's claim becomes more self-assuredly aggressive and their representation of conditions more acute, as the actual conditions have also become. They accuse the EU of being "unreasonable" in negotiations, of acting inconsistently with treaty law, of "behaving like the mafia" (UKIP_live2).

These accusations are based on UKIP's representation of the institutions of the EU as the product and project of the European elite who give the EU itself precedence over the people in a manner entirely antithetical to what democracy ought to be: "The EU are putting the interests of their failed project above that of their own citizens" (UKIP_tweet1). UKIP link this culture of self-obsessive, inefficacious "big politics" – which is characterised by "stitch-ups, slanderous accusations, voters' wishes ignored by the establishment and backstabbing from the political groups" (UKIP_press1) – to the institution of the EU. The elite render their institution dysfunctional by an obsession with their own internal squabbles while the people are forgotten; yet they are self-serving in a collective sense, joining forces only to support the misguided and nonsensical goal of the EU for the EU's sake. Instead of representing the people, the EU has become a bureaucratic and self-sustaining eternity machine that traps and confines the people, prompting UKIP to "work for the freedom of people from EU legislation and waste" (UKIP_press2). Not only does UKIP equate the European rule of law to waste; they also directly oppose it to a vague notion of "freedom", arguing that it distances representatives from the people. It is this dismissal of the people from the elite's minds that is undemocratic in UKIP's claim and that delegitimises the institutions of the EU and its rule of law in the same sweep as the elites.

The EFF share UKIP's view that the elite's mode of representation has lost sight of the purpose of democracy and that their corrupt and immoral practices are not only those of individuals; they are a culture that permeates politics. The EFF thus describe

corruption as a "sub-culture" (EFF_press1) that is being practised by elites and that subverts the democratic culture of the institution of parliament. The new post-Apartheid black elite are portrayed as traitors of their own people, enriching themselves through positions of power: "The ANC is an organisation and association of self-seeking corrupt individuals and fraudsters who are always planning on how much they should steal from the money that is supposed to help the people" (EFF_press4). Both parties then view politics as an immoral, dirty and undemocratic practice. But rather than pointing to the tedium of bureaucracy and the need for injecting some energy into proceedings like UKIP, the EFF represent the elite's practices as authoritarian and the conditions they create as outright dangerous. In doing so, they evoke collective memories and fears of the authoritarian Apartheid regime. In anticipation of their planned disruption, they tweet, "Reliable Sources tell us tht whoever raises a point of order during #SONA will be taken into a parly secret dungeon tunnel by riot police" (EFF_tweet2). And as he likens the speaker's attempt at quelling his interruption of the president's speech to Apartheid-like oppression, an EFF MP protests, "Don't be intimidating. We finished that". Such accusations and dark portrayals of political conditions are not entirely without foundation. After the 2015 event, the EFF were able to provide visual evidence of their claim that "the police were assaulting women, breaking their jaws and fracturing their chins, pulling us by our private parts" (EFF_press3).

But, unlike UKIP, the EFF distinguish between elites and institutions in their claim. They argue that the elite should not be allowed to denigrate the institution of parliament as "Parliament must be respected as sacrosanct" (EFF_live1). The democratic institutions are thus distinct from the elite who undermine them. The EFF portray the speaker, Baleka Mbete – who occupies a dual role as impartial Speaker and Chair of the ANC that has been criticised in South Africa's political system – as part of the elite. They claim that she corrupts the sacred institution of parliament: "Baleka acts in an irrational manner and forgets her own rules of parliament that she is supposed to be a custodian of" (EFF_tweet3). "Because she is partisan and is unable to listen to the logic of the EFF, she collapses parliament" (EFF_tweet4). The EFF portray the institution of parliament as a space for the practice of democratic principles, which must be impartially, rationally and objectively applied. Because she is partisan and "emotional

about it" (EFF_live1), the speaker is unfit for this task. The EFF, in contrast, self-represent as 'logical' and painstakingly refer to the rule book: "Madam Speaker, I rise on Rule 14(c) and (l) on the Rules of the Joint Sitting of Parliament on points of order. […] Point us to the Rule which gives you the power to deny us points of order" (EFF_live1). As members of the opposition, the EFF thus take it upon themselves to not only hold the government to account but also those who preside over democratic institutions.

Their self-representation as champions of the constitution and of parliamentary rules goes hand in hand with their separation of the immoral and undemocratic practices of the elite from the democratic institutions of parliament and the rule of law. While they state their concerns about the degeneration of the rule of law – "We're concerned about the judiciary. Everything in SA has been corrupted" (EFF_tweet5) – they are, unlike UKIP, keen to demonstrate their own support of, and compliance with, the institutional principles of the rule of law. In advance of their disruption of the SONA 2015, the EFF insist in a tweet, "There is nothing we're going to do that is outside the rules of Parliament" (EFF_tweet6). The EFF's performance is indeed carefully planned to comply with the *rules*, even if it disrupts institutional *norms*. And EFF MPs keenly point this out by waving copies of the constitution every time they seek to speak in Parliament (EFF_live2).

Indeed, such compliance with and championing of institutional rules becomes a key form of legitimisation of the EFF's representative claim. Unlike UKIP, the level of elite corruption that characterises the EFF's democratic context means that they are able to represent themselves in direct opposition to the elite by demonstrating such compliance. Adherence to the rule of law therefore enables them to retain a coherent expression of their anti-elitist ideology; and imposing the rule of law upon a delinquent elite is consistent with their democratic quest. Yet their slogan of "radical and militant" action also insists that the political conditions created by the elite are such that extreme action – within the confines of the rule of law and hence legitimate – is required.

While both cases denounce the elite and define politics in general as a dirty game from which they exclude themselves, they differ on their relationship to the institutions of

representative democracy. This is consistent with the notion of populism as a thin ideology. Wirth et al. (2016, p. 51) argue that the target of populism's anti-elitism depends on populism's host ideology. In the literature, this argument usually applies to a distinction between political and economic elites in right-wing and left-wing types of populism; but, as we saw above, it also applies to institutions. Indeed, UKIP's right-wing and the EFF's socialist host ideologies go some way towards explaining their different positions on the role of intermediating institutions. However, the differences between the two cases with respect to institutions are also consistent with their respective political contexts. The established democracy of the UK may be associated with institutional fatigue, especially in the case of the EU, which has often been commonly perceived to provide an additional and unnecessary layer of bureaucracy. UKIP do not necessarily denounce the rule of law and democratic institutions on a national level. Their established democratic context where elites are obeying the rule of law means that they can only achieve coherence in their anti-elitist claim by also denouncing the EU rule of law as undemocratic. Their accusations of the elite's unrepresentativeness are therefore based on a denunciation of institutions that serve to remove representatives from the people.

In the transitional democracy of South Africa, in contrast, the institution of the democratic parliament itself is sacrosanct, expensively attained in living memory by the people themselves through bottom-up protest. The constitution, which is based on the Freedom Charter, is closely associated with liberation from the Apartheid regime. The constitution itself and its institution are to be cherished and protected at all costs from those who threaten it. The EFF's championing of the institution of parliament contradicts positions in the literature that hold that populists always favour disintermediation in the form of anti-institutionalism (see e.g. De la Torre, 2014; Kriesi, 2014). The South African case suggests that democratic institutions themselves can be imbued with the symbolic meaning of 'government by the people' as they were created by the people through bottom-up protest in the course of democratic transition. They thus become emblems of victory for the silent majority.

Moreover, the EFF's claim regarding the authoritarian behaviour of the elite corresponds to South African public opinion. An Afrobarometer survey of popular

perceptions of the extent of democracy in the country amongst South African citizens is surprisingly low at 48 percent, over ten percentage points below the Afrobarometer mean across African countries (2009, p. 9). This measure is clearly at odds with expert opinion. For instance, Freedom House's democracy rating for South Africa is far higher (Afrobarometer, 2009, p. 10). As a mass ideology, the EFF's populism represents the conditions of South African democracy on the basis of public perceptions rather than expert opinion. Given the Manichaean element of populist ideology, the illiberal and illegitimate practices and actions of the South African elite invite the EFF to self-represent as upholders of certain principles of liberal democracy. As a consequence, they support democratic institutions, stand up against corruption and demand increased responsiveness of representatives to the people (Zuma has, of course, now been removed from his position as president and the EFF's claim finds other related vehicles).

6.2.2 THE MEANING(S) OF SOVEREIGNTY

The differing sources of 'dirty politics' in the two cases result in slightly different representative claims. While both centre on the notion of sovereignty – the central concept in populist ideology (Wirth et al., 2016) – the concept is given different meanings by the two parties as their mass ideologies build on different public perceptions in their given contexts. In his particular interpretation of sovereignty, Farage constructs a binary between democracy and EU membership while establishing equivalence between democracy and the nation state: "And we are the ones that want democracy, we are the ones that want nation states… not to be trapped inside this museum" (UKIP_live3). He sustains this chain of equivalence between democracy and the nation state in his claim also after the EU referendum. In an address to the EP in April 2017 after the triggering of Article 50, he further develops it by adding independence and self-determination to the chain: "…last Wednesday was a great historic day when the United Kingdom announced that we were gonna become an independent, self-governing, democratic nation once again… We believe in national self-determination" (UKIP_live2). This is UKIP's claimed motivation: "We will do everything we can to free ourselves from this corrupt institution" (UKIP_press2). In establishing democracy as national self-determination, UKIP attribute corrupt and oppressive practices not only to the European elite but also to the institution itself,

equating the two. In this claim, the EU is not only seen as a *supra*-national institution but as an institution that interferes and comes *between* the British people and their national government and thereby weakens responsiveness. The claim's central component of the nation state and its obstructed relationship to the people retains coherence with the context of UKIP's right-wing host ideology and its opposition to the supra-national institutional context of the EU.

UKIP further equate this notion of sovereignty with freedom. A contested concept in itself, freedom in UKIP's discourse is attributed only a loose meaning. It pivots on freedom from the institutions of the EU in which the British people are "trapped". The institutions' disregard of the people, combined with wasteful legislation intervening in the representative relationship between people and their national government, equates EU membership to a form of "servitude" (UKIP_press2). UKIP's conceptualisation of freedom is then consistent with their notion of sovereignty as it is based on the nation state, rather than on the individual; it is not a liberal understanding of freedom. Rather, it is freedom *from*, a negative representation. It has its roots in the binary structures of populist ideology and in its backwards-looking imagined "heartland" as the residence of the virtuous and unified people, rather than in a forward-looking notion of an ideal society or a utopian vision (Taggart, 2000, p. 95). The vaguely defined *freedom from* delivers the similarly vague 'interests of the people' and speaks to simplified popular conceptions of democracy and sovereignty as 'freedom for the people' and 'government by the people'. These in turn build on a moral contrast to the dirty "big politics" that Farage claims "the little people…, the ordinary people" rejected in the EU referendum (UKIP_live1), as we saw in the opening to this chapter. In other words, sovereignty is a concept that is defined on the basis of popular myth and the populist constituency's understanding of politics; and it is reconstituted as such in Farage's claim in a cyclical process of reinforcement between mass ideology and populism's constitutive function of representing the people as a homogenous, unified totality.

The EFF decontest the concept of sovereignty in relation to an economic and a political dimension. The economic dimension creates coherence between the populist component of the EFF's ideology and the host ideology component that thickens it. In

the context of their self-professed Marxist-Leninist brand of populism, their claim centres on "economic freedom" for the people from dominant capitalist elites. As we have already seen, the EFF represent the new post-Apartheid black elite as corrupt traitors of their own people, enriching themselves through positions of power instead of serving the people. In addition, their claim is directed against a second, distinct elite: the white minority. The claim against this white elite is a charge against their continued ownership of property – through the trope of "white monopoly capital" (EFF_tweet8) – confiscated from the local black population during Apartheid: "White arrogance is as a result of ownership of property. They will never respect us until we own means of production" (EFF_tweet9). Yet these two elites are also constituted as a homogenous totality in repeated accusations against the black elite that their "whiteness" comes out (EFF_tweet10); "whiteness" denotes not skin colour but immoral behaviour, which allows the EFF to combine white and black elites into one totality.

While the economic dimension of their decontestation of the term inheres in their Marxist host ideology, it is also born out of South Africa's economic conditions having the most unequal income distribution in the world (World Bank, 2017). It is therefore a logical adaptation of the meaning of a central concept in populist ideology to its external context. Moreover, this decontestation of sovereignty is consistent with South African citizens' perspective on democracy. Surveys and interview studies demonstrate that socio-economic rights and the concept of liberation are inextricably linked to democracy in the national psychology (Bratton and Mattes, 2001, pp. 454–5; Zuern, 2011, p. 67).

This focus on liberation in public conceptions of democracy forms the political dimension of the EFF's decontestation of sovereignty. It refers to the realisation of the Freedom Charter and is portrayed as a direct continuation of the struggle against Apartheid. The EFF represent themselves as "freedom fighters" (using the term that has previously been reserved for those people that fought against Apartheid). This label is so intrinsic to their identity that it is part of their party name. They portray themselves in direct opposition to the elite to whom they attribute the characteristics of Apartheid-like oppressors; they are a "murderous regime" (EFF_tweet11), for they

betrayed their own people (that is, black South Africans) when they violently quelled the miners' strike at Marikana in 2012. Like UKIP, the quest for freedom is a quest for *freedom from* oppression. The EFF's notion of freedom does not share UKIP's nationalist connotations but rather remains consistent with the EFF's representation of the current regime as a continuation of Apartheid, their support of democratic institutions and a rule-based notion of democracy, as well as their Marxist host ideology. In the case of both parties, the central populist concept of sovereignty is decontested in ways that are consistent with their respective brand of anti-elitism, host ideology, local political context and mass perceptions of it.

The centrality of the concept of sovereignty is evident in the two cases' claims: the elite deprive the people of sovereignty while populists restore it. This is consistent with Wirth et al.'s (2016) model of populist communication[25], on which I build. Moreover, the parties' different decontestations of sovereignty reflect Freeden's (1998a) theoretical argument that the meaning attributed to political concepts in an ideology differs according to democratic context and the (host) ideology of the party. The comparison across left-wing and right-wing host ideologies and different democratic conditions therefore sheds light on how these differences manifest themselves in different types of populist democratic claims. However, it also helps us to identify the common populist ideological core of the two claims. The two parties' ideological claims to democracy signify a notion of sovereignty that is consistent with other aspects of their representative claims, including their respective attitudes to institutions and the rule of law. Yet these claims are only as specific and coherent as they need to be for communicative purposes. They take popular myths about freedom and sovereignty as their starting point and explain their claims by othering visible social groupings, especially the elite. The goal is to minimise the discrepancy between the projected and the received claims as recipients' processes of contextualisation and interpretation are anticipated within the construction of the claims.

This, in turn, demonstrates the construction of populism as a bottom-up mass ideology. In UKIP's case, the referendum on exiting the European Union serves as the ultimate confirmation of their conception of sovereignty as national self-determination

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[25] The model is an outcome of NCCR Democracy's major project component on populism; see http://www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch/research/module2 (accessed 13.11.2017).

and freedom from the oppression of EU bureaucracy. Farage's constituency had voted[26]. In his speech on referendum night, as the result was becoming clear, a triumphant Farage announced the UK's "Independence Day" to a cheering audience (rtrumble, 2016). He was affirmed an hour later – when the projected, mediated and received performances collided – by the Scottish Daily Mail releasing their referendum special edition describing the UK as being "free from the shackles of EU" on the front page (Sutton, 2016)[27].

6.2.3 THE TOTALITY OF THE PEOPLE

Given the populism literature's insistence on the centrality of the people in populist discourse – for instance, both Jägers and Walgrave (2007) and Rooduijn and Pauwels' (2011) primary measures of populism rely on counting instances of 'the people' – references to the people were strangely scarce in my data. Yet on closer inspection, they were less absent than implicit and taken for granted in data that focused on representation of the elite and of populists themselves who, for instance, would often impersonate the people. This is partly explained by the nature of the disruptive events which, with their institutional focus, claim to address elites rather than constituents and enhance vertical rather than horizontal forms of antagonism. As the people are often negatively defined through 'the others' in populist discourse, they may be less present in disruptive performances. The implicit presence of the people in the data highlights a methodological risk in the study of populism and the analytical benefit of sensitising concepts in combination with a multi-modal interpretive approach. It also highlights an important aspect of populist ideology, which I now explore.

In the aftermath of the EU referendum, UKIP adopt a peculiar position in the EP of antagonising Britain's new negotiation partners. They intimate that Spain has made a declaration of war on Britain immediately following the referendum by allowing the "incursion" of a "warship" to "illegally enter British sovereign territory" (UKIP_press3) in the waters of Gibraltar[28]. By thus invoking the central theme of sovereignty, and by

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[26] According to several polls conducted on referendum day, 96-7% of UKIP voters voted to Remain (Lord Ashcroft, 2016; Snowdon, 2016).

[27] (though of course the media were split in their positions on the EU referendum.)

[28] UKIP fail to mention, however, that in the past three years, Spanish vessels have entered British Gibraltar's territorial waters 1,200 times (Sharman, 2018) and that the sovereignty of the waters has been disputed for centuries (Trinidad, 2016).

juxtaposing Spain and the EU on the one side with the UK on the other, UKIP portray the people of Britain as a totality that is opposed to the EU elite. The 48 percent who voted to remain are annexed into this implicit evocation of the people under attack.

UKIP simultaneously appear to assume the position of official EU withdrawal negotiator on behalf of the entirety of the UK, reinforcing their constitution of the people as a totality and themselves as representatives of the UK as a whole. In a speech to the EP, Farage thus describes the EU negotiating position of Spain having a veto on Gibraltar as a "deal breaker" (UKIP_live2). This he immediately follows by yet another antagonising provocation, accusing the EU of "behaving like the mafia" towards the British people in EU withdrawal negotiations. He also undertakes to respond directly to the EP on the EU's suggested settlement payment by the UK upon leaving the EU, which is the current topic in negotiations, terming it "bizarre" and "plucked… out of the air" (UKIP_live2). He thereby continuously evokes his constituency as the totality of the British people through antagonism aimed at the EU elite. Later in his LBC radio show he sets out the EU position and their demands as "unacceptable" and "virtually impossible" (UKIP_radio1).

What UKIP's claim demonstrates is the *structural* element of populist ideology (the juxtaposition of the concepts of the elite and the people and the way they structurally relate to each other) serving the ideological *process* of constituting the people. UKIP's evocation of the people as a totality is always achieved negatively by antagonising the elite. In other words, UKIP can evoke the people as ordinary, as Farage does when he describes the new UKIP MEPs as representatives who have the lived experience of those whom they claim to represent:

> There's a tough talking, no-nonsense ex commando with a passion for patriotism and the lessons of the front line tattooed on his heart. The steelworker's daughter side by side with the miner's daughter. The umbrella maker of Gypsy extraction joins forces with the gentle Welsh Mormon… (UKIP_col1)

But Farage is only able to constitute this constituency as a totality by contrasting it to the elite, which he achieves by attacking the elite: "virtually none of you have ever

done a proper job in your lives" (UKIP_live1). He thus invokes the opposition between the ordinary people and the politicians. The ideological structure that the constitutive process of populist ideology relies on also explains why the people are often implicit in populist discourse: they are defined in negative terms.

The EFF implicitly evoke the people in a very similar way. Like UKIP, they use a representation of political conditions at crisis point as a means of constituting the South African people as a totality. In doing so, they also explain their motivation as representatives and the underlying logic of their claims against the elite. Upon being expelled from the SONA following their disruptive action, they express their concern for the state of South African democracy: "This is a direct threat to democracy, that those who don't agree with the state they are subjected to the harsh treatment of the security institutions. Police are used to settle political differences. This has put our democracy in a serious danger" (EFF_conf2). As representatives, an attack on the EFF is an attack on democracy and on the people: "We've been elected to represented them in parliament," insists Malema (EFF_tweet12). The EFF then link their function as representatives to the act of liberation: "Whatever it takes, and however long it takes, by whatever revolutionary means, we will take over this country with the aim of total liberation and emancipation… on behalf of the people"(EFF_press3).

Their insistence on acting to uphold democracy on behalf of the people performs a similar ideological function to UKIP's by constituting the people implicitly as a totality whom they are standing up for in the face of authoritarianism. Just as UKIP portray their MEPs as ordinary workers, the EFF also achieve this through identification with the people by dressing in the clothes of domestic workers (I explore this feature of performed embodiment of the people more in the following chapters) and by establishing antagonism between the people and the elite: in contrast to the EFF, who are of the people, Zuma "doesn't know them" (EFF_tweet13).

Both parties juxtapose antagonism against the elite with self-representation as one of the people and evocation of the people as a totality. The latter serves the ideological function of constituting the identity of the community as a coherent whole (Laclau, 1997, p. 303), which I outlined in the previous chapter. UKIP portray the EU in contrast to the entirety of the UK, just as the EFF evoke democracy as a means of portraying the

South African elite as a totalitarian threat to the entire people. These grand, sweeping claims about threats to democracy allow them to portray themselves as representatives of the totality of the people. What is less visible in my data is that these totalities are confined to particular population groups. In UKIP's case 'the people' excludes immigrants, and in the EFF's case the white population in South Africa. The exclusionary argument against the elite is then mixed with nationalism in UKIP's case, and with race as a dividing line in the EFF's case. The two parties perform the ideological function of homogenising the people on the basis of culturally persistent background symbols and public perceptions of politics in their respective constituencies. UKIP rely on a nation-state-based notion of sovereignty as perceived by their constituency, as we noted in the previous section; the EFF allude to the deprivation of freedom by the South African government, which we saw was a central component of public conceptions of democracy. Both parties thus base their evocation of the people as a totality on mass perceptions by the people. This brings the constitutive function of populist ideology into dialogue with its construction as a mass ideology as it assumes a ventriloquising function of the people's voice. In this sense, the mass ideology of populism constitutes the people whom it claims to be constituted by. This is a cyclical process that reinforces the populist claim.

6.3 VALUE SYSTEMS AS MORAL SYSTEMS: THE POPULIST CONCEPTION OF IDEOLOGY

As we have seen, UKIP's claim envisions their democratic principles to be executed by sidestepping mediating institutions, EFF's to work through them. But both claims represent these principles as untainted by partisan positions. The populist parties instead represent themselves as impartial and as harbingers of truth. Their positions on political value systems are nuanced but important. They underlie the populist epistemological claim to truth and impartiality that legitimises their representative claim and the right it bestows upon them to speak on behalf of all the people. There are significant differences between the two claims, however. The EFF attack the ANC for their lack of belief and values underlying their rhetoric. UKIP, in contrast, claim that the EP elite are "fanatics" (UKIP_press4). In this section I explore these contrasting claims about political values in more detail and argue that, despite the apparent

contradiction between the two cases' contentions against the elite, their claims share the same epistemological foundation, which is a natural extension of populism's anti-pluralist ideology. I first examine how the two parties portray their respective elites' political value systems. I then go on to consider the parties' conceptions of ideology more generally, including how they align with their respective claims relating to democratic institutions, politics in general, and morality.

6.3.1 POPULIST CLAIMS ON IDEOLOGY

UKIP's approach to political value systems is pejorative. They portray partisan world views as direct threats to 'British national interests'. Paul Nuttall, for instance, comments on Labour MEPs' lack of support for UKIP's motions on EU withdrawal negotiations tabled in the EP in April 2017,

> For once it would have been nice for British MEPs to put aside petty party political differences to ensure Britain's best interests would be served. Needless to say Labour MEPs just couldn't play nice... I always expected an anti-British attitude from the Euro-federalists but to see it from British Labour is disappointing... why don't we all start playing for Team GB (UKIP_press5).

The binary that Nuttall constructs between "party political differences" and acting in Britain's interests portrays party political values as an immoral quality in British representatives and equates them with acting against the people. In this claim, there can be no differences in opinion on how to serve Britain's best interests. Instead there is an essentialist divide between "petty" positions that serve the party and those that serve the people.

UKIP then expand their argument by attaching the term "cabal" to the Labour MEPs in the above-mentioned vote: "Britain betrayed by Labour MEPs and their federalist cabal on Brexit vote" (UKIP_tweet2). In doing so, they equate Labour's "party political differences" with the dirty games of mainstream politics, denoting intrigue and a lack of openness and transparency. The attached accusation of 'federalism' is a threat to democracy more generally, as understood by UKIP. In their communications, 'federalism' is an oft-repeated charge against the elite that UKIP equate to

"fanaticism" (UKIP_press4). It serves to link UKIP's pejorative notion of value systems to the supra-national institution of the EU as well as to the culture of dirty politics that permeates it: Farage accuses the 'federalist' MEPs in a speech at the EP, "Your aim and ambition is to destroy nation state democracy." (UKIP_live2).

UKIP's conceptualisation of ideology is thus neither that of neutral value systems (such as that proposed by, for instance, Freeden, 1998a), nor a pejorative approach to ideology as focused on the processes of deception associated with false consciousness. Rather, it combines the two: political value systems *are in themselves* misrepresentations of reality and webs of deception that politicians intentionally impose upon the people through underhand means and with moral ill intent. Moreover, the portrayal of 'federalism' as such a false consciousness implies that the EU is a manifestation of self-interested motives. The implication of UKIP's stance is that it is possible to occupy an objective position outside of such imaginaries, and that such a position is required to act in the people's interests. UKIP therefore represent themselves as standing outside of 'politics', for within that realm value systems are constructed to serve the party and not the people. Instead, their position is one that objectively works 'in Britain's interests' – not just in the interests of their constituents or according to a given set of partisan values but in the interests of all the people. This claim to objectivity thus follows close on the heels of their constitution of the people as a totality. It also suggests that UKIP's denunciation of the EU elite and institutions, and of political value systems in general, adopts a moral dimension, which they apply to politics in general. Value systems are, when represented in such moral terms, not about party political choice and the personal views and preferences of voters but about right and wrong. The Labour MEPs simply voted the *wrong* way on UKIP's motions in the EP.

The EFF's approach to political value systems contrasts with UKIP's, for the EFF happily flout their 'red' credentials, self-representing as full of ideological conviction and positioning themselves very clearly on the left of the political spectrum: "Capitalism is inherently exploitative and unequal. It breeds inequality…" (EFF_tweet14). Their approach to explicit political value systems is non-pejorative, unlike UKIP's. In fact, they criticise the ANC government for their "lack [of]… ideological… capacity"

(EFF_press4) and accuse them of ideological "plagiarism" (EFF_press3). In contrast to UKIP's accusations of extremism, the EFF's charge against the elite is instead concentrated on their lack of true belief and their self-serving and corrupt behaviour for personal gain, which undermines democratic institutions. In UKIP's case, the equation of elites and institutions means that self-serving behaviour is in the interests of the institutions and hence ideological – the values of 'federalism' rather than personal greed are the problem.

Despite these differences, the EFF share with UKIP a representation of their own partisan position as the only moral one in South African politics and, although ideologically coloured, as the only true representation of reality. They substantiate this claim by portraying their (host) ideology as a direct continuation of the liberation struggle against Apartheid: their programme "is fundamentally about the attainment of all Freedom Charter objectives" (EFF_press3). Their party political work is therefore a matter of realising the objectives of the original freedom fighters, a quest which is morally unquestionable in South Africa's political culture. On the anniversary of Mandela's release from prison, they establish this equivalence between democracy and their morally based value system, where the latter even takes on the characteristics of a religious vow: "We vowed that we will defend his legacy, the legacy of the basic democratic freedoms" (EFF_press5).

Through this argument the EFF establish consistency between two seemingly opposing self-representations. First, they represent themselves as motivated by their value system, in contrast to the ANC and their "hollow recitals of the Freedom Charter…that are not genuine" (EFF_press2). Like UKIP, they therefore also contrast themselves with the elite by stressing their sincerity and their genuine belief in their programme; and, like UKIP, they legitimise this belief with their own identification with the people. Political values, to the EFF, are genuine and therefore benefit the people while the elite use them rhetorically as a form of false consciousness to disguise self-serving ends. The EFF's second and contrasting self-representation is as impartial upholders of the constitution and as non-partisan in relation to the Speaker of Parliament. Criticising the speaker for her partisan support of Zuma, they champion the constitution and the rules of parliament where she fails. They themselves are

impartial, their "logic" (EFF_tweet15) is objective; they are "an organisation that always tells the truth and claims no easy victories, the EFF will state the facts as they are" (EFF_press1).

These two contradictory aspects of their self-representation – one as partisan and one as impartial – manifest their populist ideology by contrasting themselves with differently positioned elites: the speaker who does not live up to her role's required impartiality and the ANC as a party that is dishonest about and unimaginative (EFF_press2) in the conception of their partisan values. The apparent contradiction between these self-representations is resolved through the mediating background symbol of the Freedom Charter. The South African Freedom Charter was the foundation of the Constitution in 1994 but in addition contains clauses on nationalisation and other socialist policies (which were left out of the Constitution). The EFF thus use it as a bridge to establish equivalence between their role in upholding the principles of democracy and their fervent left-wing commitment to free the people from economic oppression. This in turn is consistent with the primacy of liberation in public conceptions of democracy in South Africa (Zuern, 2011). In this claim, then, their partisan position is not partisan at all: it is a representation of objective reality, for "our programme is *the only* programme that finds true resonance with the people of South Africa" (EFF_press2; my italics).

Once again both parties then develop their claims through an ideological process of grounding them in popular conceptions of politics, as a cartel in the UK and as threatening the highly prized liberation in South Africa. Both parties retain internal consistency within their claims, and this results in different conceptualisations of, and attitudes to, ideology. Yet they share the claim that the elite impose a false consciousness upon the people and that their party is the voice of objective reality. The preceding conception of populist ideology can then be seen at work in both cases, grounding these claims in mass perceptions of politics and constituting the people as a totality where only populists are able to represent their interests as mediators of the truth.

6.3.2 ESSENTIALIST POLITICS

The replacement of political value systems with morality as a guiding line in democratic practice results in an anti-pluralist, essentialist politics as a divide between Us and Them. Representing the people's interests requires certain credentials that signify the in-group, which the elite do not possess. I have already noted how Farage provocatively attacks his fellow MEPs in a speech for never having "done a proper job in your lives …." (UKIP_live1). While in UKIP's representative claim, the role of representatives is to stand up for the people unencumbered by institutions, partisan values and the international rule of law, politics within such an undemocratic framework is self-serving and not "a proper job". The role of the representative requires him or her to also be like the people and to have a felt understanding of their lives. This is what makes UKIP MEPs "the real voice of Britain", a "passionate, conjoined family from all walks of life, bound by the quest to restore democracy, and truly represent the people of Britain" (UKIP_col1). Their credentials as representatives are to be like the people they claim to represent. And this is also what makes them truthful, sincere: "We want a team who believe in what they say. Who have lived the arguments they are going to sell" (UKIP_col1).

In this respect, the EFF's claim is similar to UKIP's. They follow suit (pun intended) by creating a stark visual contrast between themselves and mainstream representatives in parliament. Dressed as cleaners in bright red overalls, they identify with ordinary South Africans and stand out from the mass of grey suits of the mainstream elite in parliament. The plastic miners' helmets of some EFF MPs is a not-so-subtle insinuation of the betrayal of their own people that the new post-Apartheid black elite exercised at Marikana and is a moral theme that runs through the EFF's representative claim. The essentialist representation of politics as a moral divide between Us and Them is thus shared by UKIP and the EFF. In the case of the EFF, the divide between right and wrong is equivalent to a black-and-white distinction (again, pun intended) between democracy and authoritarianism that builds on the historical legacy of colonialism.

We have seen so far that the two cases differ in their explicit positions on political value systems and on the role of institutions. They remain internally coherent and adapt to their respective democratic contexts. Yet they build on a shared ideological

structure and employ the same ideological processes of decontestation and constitution of the core concepts within this structure. UKIP's claim equates institutions to the elite who are driven by self-serving motives in the name of 'federalist' extremism. UKIP therefore equate institutions with partisanship. This notion of partisanship follows a different cleavage line than the traditional left-right dimension of the political spectrum. It is ordered along a moral dimension that is determined by representatives' close and direct relationship to the people, which stands in contrast to 'politics'.

In contrast to UKIP, the EFF champion democratic institutions as non-partisan spaces that ought to be operated by rationality and impartiality. And they represent themselves as encapsulating such principles in the form of their own ideological position. UKIP and the EFF then both self-represent as impartial. UKIP, however, see the only possibility of realising such democratic principles outside the institution of the EU and obstinately reject having a partisan position. The EFF instead advocate their own partisan position (that is, their host ideology) as the only morally acceptable and true value system. By establishing equivalence between, on the one hand, a rule-based system of right and wrong and, on the other, their own partisan position, the EFF evoke a similar moral cleavage in the political spectrum to that of UKIP.

Despite their respective internally coherent claims, the ideological critique that both parties engage in comes with an epistemological pitfall. They both critique the elite's value system (or lack thereof) as immoral and position themselves as the only moral and objective guardians of representative democracy. Their world view is the only true reality. In assuming this role, they claim an epistemological privilege that implies the possibility of "truly objective knowledge about the social world, and this itself seems to be 'ideology par excellence'" (Humphrey, 2005, p. 231).

6.4 THE POPULIST CLAIM TO TRUTH-TELLING

So far I have explored the populist conception of politics as dirty and how this informs a differentiated conception of ideology in the two cases. I have also queried how the populist notions of politics and ideology are themselves ideologically constituted based on the theoretical analysis of populist ideology that I undertook in the previous

chapter. Through this analysis I found that the two parties' differences in attitudes to ideology build on a common epistemological assumption about the existence of objective truth. Two further claims follow from populists' self-representation as truth tellers: they represent themselves as martyrs, and they justify the necessity of this sacrifice with the people's ignorance.

6.4.1 TRUTH-TELLING AS MARTYRDOM

Truth-telling requires courageous self-sacrifice through the role of martyr, which attains a moral status in the populist claim: populists are sacrificing themselves for the sake of the people, unlike self-serving mainstream politicians. This is how representative democracy ought to operate. The level of sacrifice is determined by the political conditions that the populist party claim to face. In the case of the EFF, the party can realistically declare that the risks they face are relatively severe. In both the 2015 and 2017 events, they claim to be subject to "brutal violence" (EFF_press6) by security personnel in the parliament precinct who are equipped with not only cable ties but also arms and syringes containing "biological contents that are going to deactivate [EFF MPs] for the rest of the day" (EFF_live2). They have reasonable grounds for some of these claims: seven of their MPs end up in hospital following their eviction from the SONA in 2015 (see Figure 4.2). Despite such perilous conditions, the EFF state their readiness to fight for the people: "we remain fearless in the conviction that our government must be held accountable" (EFF_press5). They introduce hashtags on Twitter such as #NoRetreatNoSurrender (EFF_tweet16) in advance of their disruption of the SONA 2015. After the event they insist, "No amount of conspiracy theories, intimidation, usage of violence or threats of assassination will deter us from holding this corrupt ANC government accountable" (EFF_press6).

The risks faced by UKIP are somewhat less severe. At most they involve jeering and reprimands by the EP chair. With his usual sarcasm Farage makes a point of the opposition that is there, posting on Facebook, "Just spoke in the European Parliament, they were pleased to see me as you can tell". The impact of the comparatively minor risks, however, is relative to the actual political conditions and to the level of disruption that would retain legitimacy for the populist party. In other words, where only minor disruptions are possible, minor risks are involved; but the impact is

noteworthy when the normal state of affairs is highly regulated. Disruption is a relative act. In a reply to Farage's Facebook post, a member of the public[29] thus applauds his "courage" and "determination" in a situation where "truth hurts" the EP (TwitterUser1). Truth-telling, then, upsets the normal order of politics, and this, indeed, is its purpose, given the deceptive nature of politics.

These small-scale symbolic disruptions of norms are given added impetus by their representation in other UKIP communications. After his speech in the EP is met with heckling and an official reprimand, Farage tweets a video of the event with the comment, "Just gave both barrels to the unelected EU commission. These guys have a problem with the truth" (UKIP_tweet3). As in the case of the EFF, UKIP claim to be ready to fight for the truth. In the context of the strictly norm- and rule-bound conditions of the European Parliament, verbal provocation and a reprimand are sufficient to signify disruption of norms. And UKIP's claim to truth legitimises their disruption. UKIP thus portray their position as impartial representatives while they base their status on the claim that the norms they disrupt hide the partisan nature of the institution of the EP. This status of norms in the populist claim, and the act of disruption to expose their deceptive nature, is a theme I return to in chapter eight.

6.4.2 OPENING THE PEOPLE'S EYES

The second implication of populists' status as truth tellers is the assumed need for the people to be freed from the elite's veil of false consciousness. The populist's self-sacrifice is undertaken in order to enable the people to see through the lies of the elite, to finally become cognisant of reality. Both the EFF and UKIP make it abundantly clear that the people would be unable to see the truth were it not for their intervention. Farage tweets, "If I've helped the British people understand how ridiculous the EU are behaving, I couldn't give a damn who I upset" (UKIP_tweet4). His self-sacrifice and disruptive action are necessary to help a misguided people understand the truth behind the masquerade of politics.

The EFF match this sentiment when they criticise the elite for "playing with South Africans" (EFF_tweet17). They even go so far as to attack the people for living with a lie and not wanting to face up to the truth:

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[29] I truncate quotes of tweets by members of the public for ethical reasons.

Parliament continue to violate the constitution. And every South African is happy, every South African is celebrating that and condemning those who are saying this is wrong. Those who are saying this is wrong get condemned, they're disruptive, they're disrespectful, you're so comfortable to live with a lie, you're so scared of the truth! (EFF_conf3)

In making this claim, the EFF represent themselves very defensively as victims of accusations of disruption, a term they refuse to lay claim to despite their actions. While representing themselves as on the moral high ground, they imply that the people are being taken for a ride, are being too compliant, are lacking revolutionary spirit and are themselves acting hypocritically. This accusation undermines not only the elite's authenticity but also the people's feelings of efficacy, for they are shown to be based on deceit. The EFF thereby at once explain the ANC's continued popular majority and monopoly on power, undermine it and legitimise disruptive action. This relates to Krämer's argument (forthcoming, p. 8) that claims such as this cross over into the counterfactual. The claim is based on the premise that the people *would* be populists if they had not been indoctrinated. The community called into being by such references to the 'silent majority' (cf. Canovan, 1999) is based on "mythical thinking that does not accept the fact-value distinction" (Krämer, forthcoming, p. 8). In other words, this is an ideological process that constitutes the people as a totality and, in the course of doing so, assumes a position of objective truth for the populist actors themselves: they equate the populist value system with truth and the elite's with obfuscation.

UKIP and the EFF then share the claim that the act of norm-breaking is a democratic necessity to enlighten a hoodwinked people. The internal logic of the populist representative claim builds on the representation of populist democratic principles as questions of morality: populists represent acts of disruption as doing "what is *right*" (EFF_press7; my emphasis). Such an essentialist claim to morality is founded on a particular evaluation of elite ideology, which gives rise to populists' own representation as truth tellers and their rendering-present the people through the evocation of an empty signifier. This has important implications for how the political spectrum is constituted. I turn to this issue in the final section of this chapter.

6.5 DISCUSSION: THE MORAL CLEAVAGE OF POPULIST IDEOLOGY

In the preceding pages I have explored UKIP's and the EFF's representative claims on politics and ideology as they appear at face value. I have probed their inner logics, questioned their origins in the parties' host ideologies and democratic contexts, and analysed the ideological processes of bringing them about. What emerged was a peculiarly populist conception of a moral politics built on a claim to truth-telling and its essential role in democratic practice. The notion of dirty politics – and of the two populist parties clearly defining 'politics' differently from mainstream parties – was an outcome of inductive analysis. In the course of dissecting the populist claim on politics, three central concepts emerged that contribute to the construction of this claim: anti-elitism, sovereignty and a homogenous notion of the people. These concepts are indeed the pillars of most ideological definitions of populism and of the one I adopted in the introduction to this study. An additional inductively discovered aspect of the claim was populists' self-representation as truth tellers, and this is a theme we will return to as we progress through the following chapters.

The ways in which these core populist concepts were decontested by the two case studies differed substantially, resulting in dissimilar claims. In each party's claim, the concepts were given meaning by the parties' host ideology, the context they respond to, and mass perceptions of sovereignty and politics in that given context. This lent internal consistency to the parties' claims. Despite these differences, I found that the *processes* of constructing these claims through context and mass perceptions of politics and of constituting the people as a totality were common features of populist ideology. They cut across the right-wing case of UKIP in an established democracy and the left-wing case of the EFF in a transitional democracy. In the following I first briefly summarise the two parties' respective claims at face value. I then return to their commonalities in the form of the populist cleavage discussed in the preceding chapter as one that cuts across the political spectrum. I posit that this cleavage relies on conceiving of populist ideology as a process that is intimately tied to communication.

In UKIP's claim to representation the nation state is the sole legislator and executive; the institutions of the EU are dismissed as unnecessary and obstructive mediators between the people and their national representatives; and political representatives

ought to have a real-life understanding of the people they represent. The claim is a denial of the multi-step mechanisms of political representation. Beyond these generalities, UKIP's claim becomes even more abstract and takes the form of an epistemological argument which departs from the ways in which modern representative politics works. They argue for a politics that is not tainted by party-political differences. In this view, politics should not be guided by competition amongst representatives seeking to represent different constituencies, interest groups or value systems but by morality. This would ensure that representatives speak 'the truth' instead of engaging in strategic game-playing and dirty politics. Such truth is always in the interests of all the people, which are constituted as a totality. The people thereby lose their plurality in an anti-liberal claim. Though the truth in fact resides in the people, they are unable to see it for themselves. Representatives attain the necessary qualities of truth teller by virtue of their inherent understanding of the people and simultaneous understanding of the game of deception that constitutes politics. In the given situation, only populists have this special ability: they are the media (in the clairvoyant sense of the word) between the people and the political world.

The EFF's representative claim is at face value in many ways closely aligned with the principles of liberal democracy. The EFF support the rule of law, the constitution and the legitimacy of Parliament. They stand up against corruption and support increased responsiveness of representatives to the people. In this respect they serve an important democratic function in a transitional democracy. Yet they flaunt the norms of liberal democracy, and the ideological processes of populism that they employ remain problematic and essentially illiberal. The EFF represent themselves as bridging three roles: party political representatives; personifications of 'the people'; and impartial upholders of democratic principles. They perform each of these roles in antagonistic terms: as ideologists with creative solutions to the people's problems, they contrast themselves with unimaginative plagiarist and self-serving elites; as part of the virtuous, ordinary people, they attack the elite for their practices of deception; and as impartial and principled democrats, they oppose a corrupt elite that is out to destroy the institutions of democracy. In performing all of these roles, they align themselves against the dominant power in a moral argument of democratic accountability to the historical principles of the freedom struggle. The EFF merge these

roles into one coherent identity by representing their values as fact. The moral essentialism of their claim is shared with UKIP and resides in a self-representation as the only political actors with access to truth and objective reality, willing to sacrifice themselves for the people by fighting the self-serving and undemocratic elite.

The two parties' claims differ substantially for they are grounded in different democratic contexts to which they respond. They contrast their own self-representations to their respective contextual conditions, which also fuel them with culturally specific values and communicative symbolic resources. Yet both parties' claims are founded on a proclaimed wish for a more substantive and moral politics. So where does this claim shift into populism as an illiberal ideology? Since the concepts that comprise populism are given different meanings in different contexts, we must look to the relations between them. These relations are communicative, and they involve processes of social construction and of the constitution of reality. In other words, the answer lies in conceiving of populist ideology as a process, and this in turn suggests a concern with populist communication. With this shift in focus, the similarities between the two parties' representative claims start to emerge.

To illustrate this, I revisit the model of the populist ideological cleavage I introduced in the previous chapter, and on which I am now in a position to build. In doing so, my focus is on the cleavage that populists *construct* in the ideological spectrum. The moral dimension to both parties' claims results in an ideological cleavage that does not follow the traditional left-right divide (Figure 6.1). The concern with moral, rather than value-based, differentiation results in the cleavage being an essentialist one, not a gradational one, as Stavrakakis (2014) and Ostiguy (2009) suggest in their respective arguments on a populist cleavage. According to the populist representative claim, a representative is either right or wrong, good or bad, truthful or lying. The cleavage is constructed around the architecture of key concepts within populist ideology: it pitches the elite on the one hand in an antagonistic relationship with, on the other hand, the people and the populist who is able to restore their sovereignty. The populist cleavage, then, is chiefly concerned with relationships to 'the people', that is, with the iterative and intersubjective processes of constructing populist ideology and constituting its constituents.

The social construction of ideology is in the case of populism based on mass perceptions of politics. The populist cleavage is therefore also based on a distinction between mass ideology and elite ideologies, where the latter are occupied with their own internal squabbles and all obfuscate the truth. It results in a simplistic dichotomy of 'politics' as bad and acting in the people's interests as good. The latter involves identification between the people and their representatives through embodiment and lived experience. In this populist dimension the representative identifies with the people, whereas in the 'political' dimension the representative is separated from the represented.

Concepts: sovereignty, the people, the populist representative

Social construction of ideology: ideology originates in the people; the populist identifying with the people and inherently understanding them

Constitutive function: the people as a totality excluding the elite and as good; the populist world view as the truth

LEFT ⟷ RIGHT

'POLITICS'

Concepts: the elite

Social construction of ideology: ideology as an elite construction; the elite as self-serving and lacking identification with and understanding of the people

Constitutive function: representation of the people through deception and false consciousness, undermining the sovereignty of the people

FIGURE 6.1: The ideological cleavage evoked by the populist representative claim

The constitutive function of ideology can be seen in the populist side of the cleavage being characterised by truth. In their claim to truth, populists adopt the role of *parrhesiastes* (Foucault, 1983), truth tellers, who reveal the absurdity of the left/right distinction: all politicians are the same, for all their ideologies are false consciousness.

This assumes an epistemologically privileged position for the populist as truth teller and justifies populists' self-sacrifice in the interests of an illiberal notion of the people as a homogenous totality. Populism famously resists compliance with traditional ideological cleavages by mixing elements from both the left and the right in their own policies (Germani, 1978; Giglioli, 2013; Ostiguy, 2009). Indeed, so does its voting public, many of whom do not perceive this inconsistency (Converse, 1964a). The political side of the cleavage is marked by the elite's deception, which undermines sovereignty and democratic representation. The implications of this cleavage for democratic politics are problematic as it suggests an essentialist politics that is anti-pluralist and undermines representative democracy's foundation of a distinction between values and facts. This is a theme I return to in the following chapters and, in more detail, in the conclusion.

The above similarities and differences start to demonstrate how comparative study across different democratic contexts adds to our understanding of populist communication. Taking the two parties' representative claims at face value, we can clearly see how they have emerged from different contexts that shape both their content and form. However, the conception of populist ideology as a process aids comparison, and similarities start to emerge. We get to the essence of populist ideology. This resides in the mutually constitutive relationship between populist ideology and its context: in the *processes* of constructing populism as a mass ideology and of constituting the people as a totality. This in turn suggests that a communication perspective on populism is able to resolve many of the comparative difficulties that have held back the study of populism. It also suggests that we need to dig deeper into these communicative processes that underlie populist ideology. That is what I now turn to in the next chapters.

7. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

7.1 INTRODUCTION:

The analysis in the previous chapter occasionally strayed onto populism's performative qualities: instances of both parties representing themselves as embodying the people and the constitutive function of portraying the people as a totality. While there is a certain overlap between populism's ideological and performative qualities, an analytical perspective focused entirely on ideology was unable to fully engage with and explain these aspects of populist communication. Even a communication-oriented approach to populist ideology did not wholly account for the interaction between form and content in the processes of representation that I outlined in the conceptual framework in chapter two. I suggest that the performance of populism is an empirical entry point to the study of populist ideology as it manifests itself communicatively. Moreover, this analytical point is based on the conceptual assumption that the process of manifesting populist ideology in performance also contributes to its meaning. Approaching populism from a performance perspective recognises the social construction of populism; the performance happens in a dialectic with the audience and it draws on shared cultural resources and symbols that are familiar to the audience. The approach thereby reinforces the idea of populism as a mass ideology that is socially constructed on the basis of ordinary people's perceptions of politics. It also engages with the constitutive dimension of meaning-making through the notion of performativity: a performance creates meaning that evokes an alternative reality, and this can have a political and ideological function. It therefore supplements and deepens my approach to ideology and recognises both its social construction and its constitutive function.

I have suggested that populist meaning-making occurs in the mutually constitutive interaction between populist ideology and its performance. This communicative process is the very means of establishing the nature of the relationship between populist representatives and the people: the manifestation of populist ideology in performance constitutes a populist mode of representation. In this chapter I adopt a

performance perspective on populism that provides a bridge between populist ideology and representation, both conceptually and empirically. At the conceptual level I draw on the framework I outlined in chapter two and suggest that representation comes about through the interaction between form and content, which in politics occurs through performance and ideology. At the empirical level I approach populist ideology as manifesting itself in populist performance, often and most clearly so in disruptive performance. Such performances symbolically enact the relational nature of populist ideology as populists identify with the people in an attack on the elite in order to restore sovereignty. We can therefore empirically study the populist mode of representation through the process of manifesting populist ideology in disruptive performance. With this approach I lay the foundations for addressing the question, **how does disruptive performance communicatively manifest a populist mode of representation?**

Importantly, the integration of populist ideology and performance enables me to recognise the meaning-making process that occurs in the interaction between them. This perspective links the manifestation of populist ideology in performance with an aesthetic approach to populist political representation. The approach enhances our knowledge of populism as it allows us to understand how populist ideology translates into a particular mode of political representation that is challenging the epistemological foundations of representative democracy. Closest to home this mode of representation has exposed a cleavage in the public based on their expectations of representative democracy that is demonstrated by the results of the British referendum to leave the EU.

My decision to approach populist ideology through its performance – and through disruptive performance in particular – also has another advantage. It allows me to take the most remarkable and noticeable aspects of populism as a starting point and thereby recognise their importance, both in garnering support from a disaffected part of the electorate, gaining the attention of the media, and impacting on the political process. Rather than dismissing them as 'mere performance', I develop a solid conceptual foundation for analysing them. Populists have an ability to emotionally engage and connect with their constituents, effectively use symbolic imagery and

disruptive and unorthodox modes of communication, and to do so in spectacular ways that answer modern media's invitation to politicians to deliver politics in increasingly stylised and spectacular form (Corner and Pels, 2003; Moffitt and Tormey, 2014, p. 387). The range and hybridisation of media modes and formats of the modern mediated environment invite approaches that consider visual, performative and aesthetic elements of political representation (Moffitt and Tormey, 2014, p. 385). Acknowledging the manifestation of populist ideology in performance enables the analysis of the "*mechanisms* of representation – mediated enactments, televisual performances, rallies, speeches, riots, use of certain dress, vernacular and so forth – …[and it] stresses the very important (and sometimes forgotten) role of presentation in re-*presentation.*" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 49; emphasis in original). It thereby also constitutes a necessary link between populist ideology and the media in processes of meaning-making. It brings to mind the necessity of mediation in processes of representation, through institutions and technologies, as Moffitt suggests, but also through language and symbolic action.

In the following I adopt a cultural pragmatics (Alexander et al., 2006) perspective on performance. This approach enables me to engage with the often spectacular and captivating modes of constructing meaning that explain populism's appeal to both the media and its constituents. But it also reminds us that a concern with the means and modes of conveyance of meaning should not be at the expense of a simultaneous consideration of the central role of text and semantic content in performances of representation, nor of the role of context in constituting meaning. I outline this approach in the first section of this chapter and hone in on a few specific elements of Alexander's model of social performance that are most relevant to the analysis of populism. I then connect these to the notion of disruptive performance. In the second section I establish the link between populist performance and political representation. Taking the performance of the populist representative claim as my point of departure, I develop its two dimensions: self-representation and representation of the people. I argue that approaching populism from a performance perspective brings out a particular mode of representation through these two dimensions of the populist representative claim.

7.2 SOCIAL PERFORMANCE AND POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

As I have suggested in the preceding chapters and above, I do not conceive of performance as simply form without substance. Rather, it is an essential and necessary means of manifesting ideology and enacting the representative relationship. In the following I develop this perspective further. I argue that political performance establishes the relationship between representatives and the people and, in the process of doing so, contributes to processes of meaning-making. In this section I outline those aspects of social performance theory (Alexander, 2006) that are most relevant to conceptualising the performance of populist representation: the means of symbolic production, background symbolic resources[30] and social power. While these are analytical tools that I use in the next empirical chapter, they also conceptually connect the process of meaning-making inherent in representation to its democratic and socio-political context. Culturally specific background symbols are resources that populists draw on to anchor their performance in its context and create familiarity for the audience, while the social power exercised by elites in a given democratic context confines their performance. These performances in turn have a constitutive function that recreates in new form the context on which they are based. This mutually constitutive relationship between performance and context in the process of political representation is analogous to the perspective on meaning-making that I outlined in chapter two.

7.2.1 THE CULTURAL PRAGMATICS APPROACH TO PERFORMANCE

In the previous two chapters I developed a notion of populism as a mass ideology grounded in people's conceptions of politics, recognising a distinction between ideology as experienced and understood by mass publics and as exuded by elites. The view that populist ideology is based on people's lived experiences suggests that it has a material dimension (Eagleton, 1991, p. 14). Ideology interacts with the world through processes of representation that produce and reproduce meaning through institutional and social practices (Downey, 2008, p. 64). I conceive of such practices as cultural performance, which Alexander defines as:

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[30] Alexander uses the term 'background representations'. I adapt this to 'background symbols' to avoid confusion with the conceptualisation of representation that I developed in chapter two.

…the social process by which actors, individually or in concert, display
for others the meaning of their social situation. This meaning may or
may not be one to which they themselves subjectively adhere; it is the
meaning that they, as social actors, consciously or unconsciously wish
to have others believe. In order for their display to be effective, actors
must offer a plausible performance, one that leads those to whom their
actions and gestures are directed to accept their motives and
explanations as a reasonable account. (Alexander, 2004b, p. 529).

An essential characteristic of a cultural pragmatics approach to performance is that it
consolidates the semantics and pragmatics of communication – the meaning and the
use of language, to put it plainly. As in the perspective I outlined in chapter two, it
recognises that content and form interact in the process of representation. The
pragmatics side of this perspective builds on the work of Goffman and Austin. Goffman
(1959), with his focus on performance in everyday life, sought to define the person in
terms of their behaviour in interactions with other people in a set of contingent
circumstances. He was particularly concerned with the notion of impression
management as a necessary and ubiquitous way to intentionally and strategically
negotiate unpredictable social situations. For example, people express themselves
differently in public-facing situations (frontstage) than in more private backstage
contexts. Goffman's perspective highlights the importance of context in defining what
is deemed appropriate behaviour. It is therefore relevant to the analysis of disruptive
performance as relative to the norms of a given context.

Moreover, it is not only the form of disruption that is relative – the types of
expressions given by the performance such as gestures, facial expressions, things said,
and so on – but also its force, that is, its effect on reality. Butler notes that,

[t]he force of the performative is thus not inherited from prior usage,
but issues forth precisely from its break with any and all prior usage.
That break, that force of rupture, is the force of the performative,
beyond all questions of truth and meaning. (Butler, 1997, p. 152)

Butler's point that performance builds on established texts but also breaks from them is not specific to disruptive performance in the sense I use the term in this study. Rather, her argument highlights the constitutive function of performance: while all performances build on existing texts, they also reinvent them anew (although disruptive performances do so particularly explicitly). In this sense, performance does not simply *re*-present something without a change of meaning occurring through that process, just as the work of representation involves more than re-presenting.

This perspective builds on Austin's (1975) concern with the use of language. His notion of performativity denotes how language aims to get things done and not only to describe them. Certain types of speech acts – which I here extend to symbolic acts more generally (see for example Alexander, 2006) – have the ability to realise their semantic contents. Through what Austin termed their 'illocutionary force', they constitute reality, while they have consequences beyond the speech act itself through their perlocutionary force. Austin suggested that the evaluative standard of performatives be "felicity", as opposed to truth or accuracy, since the latter do not necessarily denote whether performatives work successfully. Indeed, whether we deem one representation of reality or another truthful is a question of ideology rather than performance, as I argued in the preceding chapter in the context of populists' ideological equation of their own world view with truth.

The aesthetic quality of performance – its ability to constitute reality – explains one side of the relationship between performance and its context. Yet neither Goffman nor Austin account for the other side of this relationship, namely the "'citational' quality" (Alexander, 2006, p. 4) of performance also noted by Butler in the quote above. This relates to the conceptual framework in chapter two where we saw that Hall stresses the cultural situatedness of meaning. In the preceding discussion about ideology, I noted this feature in the shaping of the political concepts of an ideology according to a given socio-political context. These concepts are also received and interpreted according to personal schemas of meaning structures, which themselves are culturally situated. But I also noted the active work of performing ideological content to an audience in a way that makes it resonate. Hall reminds us that,

> [r]epresentation functions less like the model of a one-way transmitter and more like the model of a dialogue... What sustains this 'dialogue' is the presence of shared cultural codes, which cannot guarantee that meanings will remain stable forever – though attempting to fix meaning is exactly why *power* intervenes in *discourse*. But, even when power *is* circulating through meaning and knowledge, the codes only work if they are to some degree shared… We should perhaps learn to think of meaning less in terms of 'accuracy' and 'truth' and more in terms of effective exchange (Hall, [1997]2013, pp. 10–11; italics in original).

Hall then agrees with Austin about the criteria for evaluating the ability of a performance to effectively constitute reality. The cultural codes that are the performer's resources in this respect are what Alexander and Mast are concerned with when they seek to connect "the practice of language with its texts" (2006, p. 3). Alexander, for example, considers as cultural codes not only language but also the ways in which actors in political performances draw on background symbols that are culturally specific and collectively shared by the audience and that mediate – both ways – between cultural institutions and ideas. Such background symbols are then resources for social performers that they can use as a basis for their performative work of constituting reality. For, as Butler reminds us, any speech or symbolic act based on socially established meanings also reconstitutes and transforms them in the process of performing them. Isin and Ruppert sum up her argument well: "If a convention is to be cited to accomplish an act, a repetition of certain norms will be necessary. Yet each repetition will bring new circumstances to bear on the act, so much so that it is a resignification – a new deployment of convention" (2015, p. 56).

In politics, this constitutive character of performance can be present even in seemingly descriptive statements about reality (Alexander, 2012, p. 286) as politicians attempt to evoke a particular view of reality and portray it as fact. Such performative representations include the evocation of the people, the representatives themselves and the political context they respond to (for instance, a crisis is often the vehicle of populism; Moffitt, 2016; Taggart, 2000). In this view political representation is a performance that is constructed on the basis of collectively shared symbols and texts

and that uses these to creatively constitute a relationship between a representative and the people through the aesthetic process of political representation that I outlined in chapter two. It thereby shifts from questions of the structural relations and forms of representation as addressed by, for instance, Mair, Pitkin and Kriesi, to the mechanisms involved in constituting such a relationship (Ankersmit, 2002; Saward, 2010). It is a perspective that is founded on meaning-making as central to the process of political representation and builds on the analogy with communicative processes of representation that I outlined in my conceptual framework. In other words, communication – and, more specifically, performance – takes centre stage. Alexander's theory of cultural pragmatics brings together "meaning structures, contingency, power, and materiality" (ibid., p. 527) in the notion of social performance. It thereby resolves the dualism between content and form, ideas and materiality, ideology and performance. Within this perspective, when the constitutive elements of a performance – systems of collective representation, actors, audience, means of symbolic production and *mise-en-scène* (Alexander, 2006, pp. 32–7) – become fused, the performance becomes convincing and effective and the actors appear authentic. If these elements remain – or are rendered – de-fused, the projected performance comes across as artificial and contrived. I now briefly go through the, for my purposes, most important analytical elements of Alexander's model of social performance.

Means of symbolic production

The means of symbolic production are the material resources for the projected performance. This element of performance acknowledges the integrated relationship between meaning and materiality whereby "material things and their uses are shaped by meanings" and "meaning gets special power when embodied in materiality" (Alexander et al., 2012, p. 18). In the two case studies, they include Farage's pint of beer, the UKIP MEPs' sucker-pad Union Jacks[31] and the EFF's red domestic workers' uniforms and miners' helmets (see Figure 4.4). They further include the physical setting of a performance. In the case of disruptive performance, this is the institutional

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[31] Farage's most ubiquitous photo opportunity is being pictured with a pint of beer in a traditional British pub. In the European Parliament UKIP MEPs habitually stick a small Union Jack to their desks to signal their call for national self-determination.

setting of parliament, which symbolically contributes to the meaning that disruption projects by virtue of the norms and symbols associated with it. The (virtual) setting of social media likewise has both a mundane function as a resource for mediation to an audience and symbolically produces meaning, for instance in its circumvention of 'elite' media.

Background symbolic resources

Background symbols in the form of myths and traditions, collective symbols and memories constitute symbolic resources for populist actors and establish the internal boundary for a performance (Alexander, 2006, pp. 33, 36). They are "the universe of basic narratives and codes and the cookbook of rhetorical configurations from which every performance draws" (Alexander, 2006, p. 58). They are therefore culturally specific but also to some extent media specific as they include, for instance, social imaginaries associated with specific social media platforms. In the case of populism, constructions of the 'heartland' (Taggart, 2000) hook into cultural investments made by the represented (the people) for the purpose of constructing myth anew. To do so, populists must make existing myths "walk and talk" through pragmatic action (Alexander, 2006, p. 33). We saw in the previous chapter that populists reveal the very contingency and contestability of the existing social order by claiming it is a false consciousness constructed by the elite. To increase the chances of making their projected performance resonate with the audience, they integrate existing background symbols to create a 'fused' web that is contextual and forms a basis for their own ideological demands and alternative construction of reality. That is, they incorporate background symbols into their own performative constructions of ideology. I argued in chapter five that background symbolic resources are important for the performance of populist ideology in particular. As a mass ideology that aims to resonate with public perceptions of politics, populism relies heavily on background symbols not only for the effective projection of their ideology but as its constitutional basis. Their representative claim to speak for the people is based on a representation of themselves as the (only) natural authority on key background symbols, such as liberation in South Africa and nation-state sovereignty in the UK.

Social power

"The distribution of power in society – the nature of its political, economic, and status hierarchies, and the relations among its elites" (Alexander, 2006, p. 36) – determines access to the means of symbolic production. While background symbolic resources constitute the internal boundary of a performance, social power establishes its external boundary; together they create the contextual conditions for performance. Both background symbols and social power are part of the socio-political context and are subject to challenge and change through populist disruption. In established democracies we might see more rigid legislative and institutional frameworks and norms confining populist disruptive performance. In transitional democracies we may see elites adopting authoritarian means of restricting access to the means of symbolic production, including the means of mediation, while institutional frameworks are more fragile. Social power also involves media ownership structures, political control of media, technologies and their affordances, and legal frameworks.

7.2.2 THE PERFORMANCE AND DISRUPTION OF AUTHENTICITY

A successful performance depends on the actor(s) re-fusing the elements of a performance into a convincing whole so that the audience accepts the actor's strategic intention. As we saw above, this involves the performance creating new meaning but building on and referring to shared values inherent in background symbols. A political performance that wishes to appear constative whilst evoking a particular value system must link the presentation of such views to recognisable myths and collectively held beliefs. However, unlike a theatrical performance that relies on the audience's suspension of disbelief, a social performance – and, in particular, a political performance – is evaluated on the basis of whether the acting is a true expression of the actor's personality, values and beliefs (Giesen, 2006, pp. 354–5). Artful presentation is in politics not to be admired as it is in theatre but is to be distrusted. The audience wants to know if the actor is expressing their true inner feelings, for people's real concerns and grievances are at stake.

Alexander therefore identifies authenticity – as the moral ideal of staying true to oneself (Taylor, 1992, pp. 15–16; Trilling, 1972) – as a criterion of a successful social performance (Alexander, 2006, pp. 54–7). He moreover links authenticity to the

intention of the actor (2006, p. 29,31). An authentic actor appears convincing and sincere and to be acting on the basis of honest intentions without ulterior motives of manipulation and deceit. However, having honest intentions and being true to their values, feelings and beliefs may require the actor to mask the existence of social powers that shape the performance and divert it from being a true expression of the beliefs that supposedly inspire it. While a performance must work within the imposition of social power, its authenticity is established by giving the impression that social power is mere means of conveying meaning.

The notion of authenticity as a performed construct lends itself to practices of impression management in the mediated relationship between politicians and the public. Its importance has made it "a strategy in its own right" (Enli, 2016, p. 133) in attempts to build trust between politicians and the public (Pels, 2003). When considering authenticity in relation to the media and processes of mediation, we therefore become more concerned with the *appearance* of being authentic rather than with the moral ideal itself as it comes from within. Despite the seeming contradiction, authenticity, when aimed at a process of mediation, is a performed quality where the performer "*seems as though* he or she is true to his or her inner self" (Enli, 2015, p. 111; my emphasis).

Populist disruptions of political norms and rituals can be seen as attempts to de-fuse elite performances as inauthentic. In this sense, disruption is a form of meta-performance, a performance in itself whose object is to dissect and de-fuse elite performances. The act of disruption suggests that the elite have ulterior motives:

> If authenticity marks success, then failure suggests that a performance
> will seem insincere and faked: the actor seems out of role, merely to be
> reading from an impersonal script, pushed and pulled by the forces of
> society, acting not from sincere motives but to manipulate the audience
> (Alexander, 2011, p. 54).

Moreover, even if performed, authenticity remains imbued with the moral quality suggested by Taylor above; inauthenticity is perceived as an immoral quality in a politician. Populist disruptive performance thereby becomes a politics of morals. On

the basis of a claim that sees elite authenticity as a cause for concern – for it is a sign of the elite successfully duping the people – it disrupts elite performance.

An authentic political performance then relies on consistency between the performance and the actor's underlying values. In a media climate characterised by the risks that ubiquitous visibility brings, a truly authentic political performance can therefore only be achieved if the politician's public persona appears consistent with the private one: the performance of authenticity must never be seen to be performed. In Goffman's (1959) terms, authenticity marks the point when frontstage behaviour is perceived as consistent with backstage behaviour. Managing visibility, and managing it well so as to provide an authentic performance, becomes so much more vital and so much more fraught with danger in the new media environment. Especially when populist disruptive characters are at play. The populist strategy of making visible the false authenticity performances by the elite feeds into a climate of public mistrust characterised by the precariousness of authenticity in mediated representation. But disruptive acts by definition also serve to construct populists' own authenticity. In the words of Healey (2010, p. 530), "notions of authenticity… idealize the creative transgression of social norms". Through this act of transgression of norms – that is, through disruption – populists render elite performances inauthentic while themselves evoking the moral ideal of authenticity.

In addition to consistency with one's values and beliefs, Enli adds two further criteria to the political performance of authenticity: intimacy and spontaneity (2015, chap. 6). Spontaneity can be signalled through unscripted moments and a lack of posing. Intimacy can be achieved by telling revealing anecdotes or demonstrating closeness to the people. In the literature on social media, intimacy is, for instance, connected to acts of self-disclosure and disinhibition (see, for example, Miller, 2011). Populists' famous bad manners and breach of the norms of formal speech, dress and behaviour serve exactly this purpose. As forms of disruption that signal closeness to the people and distance to the political elite, they are inherently intimate and authentic. I posit that populists' disruptive performances in combination with their performative identification with the people perform two simultaneous functions. First, they aim to expose elite performances as inauthentic – that is, as inconsistent with their values,

scripted, distant from the lives of ordinary people, and intended to deceive. Second, they embody these very qualities of spontaneity, consistency and intimacy in populists' own self-representations. Disruption thereby becomes a means for populists to assert their outsider status, communicate their ideology in a performance that is consistent with its values, and to stake their particular democratic claim to legitimacy through authenticity. As such, it is a symbolic manifestation of a specifically populist mode of representation.

Goffman believed that the social world is best discovered in moments where norms and conditions fail and thereby expose the rules that bind together the social. In this spirit he studied situations of 'role breaking' such as embarrassment and inappropriate behaviour. The notion of disruption that I have engaged with transfers this argument into the world of the political while the perspective of cultural pragmatics bridges the theoretical division between ritual and Goffman's focus on the everyday (Alexander et al., 2012). Disruptive performances forcefully create such moments of failure of elite performances of authenticity and of the established norms and conditions that they perform. In disruptive types of performance, the noncompliance with and challenge to norms and rituals, established power structures and their meanings puts a spotlight on the elite's performance of their social power and questions their underlying motives.

Social power constrains the projected performance by determining access to the means of symbolic production and mediation. In the case of the SONA 2015, for instance, the government (unsuccessfully) attempted to ban the EFF's red uniforms in parliament, and they censored the public broadcaster. In the case of disruption, social power also constitutes the motivation and legitimacy for the performance; disruption is by definition an attack on social power. Therefore the physical manifestation of social power – in the form of the institutional setting of the disruption and the norms and practices that reinforce and constitute social power – are turned into means of symbolic production in disruptive performances. As I noted above, this conversion of social power into means of symbolic production is a means of achieving authenticity. It is in this sense that disruption as a meta-performance deconstructs social power as a performance in itself. It is discursive struggle made explicit and made spectacular. Disruptive performances seek to challenge the legitimacy and institutional

reproduction of the cultural norms and practices of politics (Spary, 2010). They constitute ideological expressions that present a contrasting view to the establishment norm in a given context as ideologies of resistance and reformation. Disruptive performances are therefore not only discourses that take place in conflict situations and thereby enhance ideological discourse; they also create and construct such situations and contribute to the meaning of the ideology that they embody.

Given the central role that social power plays in disruptive performances, I approach disruptive performance as a relational concept, as I briefly noted in chapter three. In doing so, I build on Moffitt's deliberately loose term of "bad manners". These manifest themselves in different ways as displays of contempt for the 'usual' practices of 'respectable' politics since "considerations of what constitutes appropriate behaviour are themselves culturally specific" (2016, p. 58). This relational nature is, for instance, evident in different institutional settings having established norms that accept different levels of disruption. The South African case exemplifies a context in which democratisation has come about through disruptive acts from below and in which the political culture is characterised by public protest. This attributes a certain legitimacy to acts of disruption from below as a vehicle for the establishment of new norms and conditions. In the case of UKIP, in contrast, the European Parliament is a more rule-driven political culture, with relatively unyielding social powers in the form of institutional structures. It is dominated by a mode of elite representation in which both norms and conditions are more rigidly adhered to.

I consider a further relational aspect of disruptive performance in the context of mediated as opposed to 'live' disruptive performances. Different modes of mediation involve different material conditions and imaginaries that in turn enhance or subdue the force of disruption and contribute to the meaning-making process. For instance, a certain form of speech that would be heavily disruptive in the European Parliament would hardly cause a raised eyebrow on Facebook. As I discuss below, disruption from below in social media is proscribed by different norms and in some forms is even part of the social imaginary of social media, which has become popularly known as a tool of democratic revolution (e.g. Diamond, 2010). Social media communication may thus serve as a legitimisation of live disruptive action to wider audiences.

7.3 PERFORMANCE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM

The study of performance in the context of populism has only very recently started gaining ground (Ekström et al., forthcoming; Ekström and Morton, 2017; Moffitt, 2016; Nolan and Brookes, 2013; Schoor, 2017; Wodak, 2015, chap. 6). Few conceptual approaches engage with populism as a mode of representation (Mastropaolo, 2017; Roberts, 2017). Even fewer connect populist performance and political representation (Moffitt, 2016), and this intersection has yet to be studied empirically. On the basis of the preceding discussion about social performance, in this section I consider how the two dimensions of the representative claim – self-representation and the evocation of the people – are performed in the populist claim. In the course of doing so, I reflect on these two dimensions as performances – specifically as performances of populist ideology – and on what they tell us about populism's relationship to representative democracy. I therefore engage further with the aesthetic theory of representation that I introduced in chapter two. The discussion also builds on the preceding analysis of ideology and how populists view its role in representative democracy.

The first dimension of the populist representative claim, self-representation, rests on an ambiguity inherent in populism: the populist as one of the people and as an exceptional representative. I noted above that an important aspect of an authentic performance is to retain consistency with one's values and beliefs. I posit that, despite the apparent contradiction, this is what populists seek to achieve with their ambiguous self-representation as ordinary-yet-extraordinary. Populists' self-representation as ordinary, sees the populist performer embody the people. This is the function that De la Torre refers to when he speaks of the populist mode of representation as seeking "its unity in the embodiment of the people in the figure or in the name of a leader" (De la Torre, 2014, p. 18). Such self-representation of ordinariness is evident in a variety of modes of populist performance. Populists keep arguments simple and accessible and deliver them in everyday language that often dismisses political correctness. Ordinariness also manifests itself in a variety of means of symbolic production that draw on shared background symbols, such as Nigel Farage usually being pictured with a pint of bitter or even smoking; and the EFF's uniforms of overalls and miner's

helmets because they are there to work and to signal their identification with the Marikana miners.

Self-representation as ordinary requires the transgression of the norms of formal political speech, appearance and behaviour. As a form of disruptive performance, it signals intimacy and exposure of the populist's underlying values and thereby performs authenticity. It is a means of bridging the representative gap. Ankersmit (2002) suggests that the power imbalance inherent in the representative relationship whereby the representative is relatively free to both re-present and construct the will of the represented has become too inflexible and should indeed be bridged. Yet populists' performance of the people through embodiment goes one step further. It symbolically erases the gap altogether by claiming that no power imbalance exists between themselves and the people. Intuitively most people would approve of this normative idea of political representation: "the opinions of the electorate's representatives should be exactly the same as those of the electorate itself" (Ankersmit, 2002, p. 109). This view of representation is based on the resemblance theory (mimesis), which I touched on in chapter two. Ankersmit perceives this interpretation of political representation to be incomplete. For representatives are more than mere mouthpieces of public opinion. But let us first consider how populists might perceive it. I build on my argument from chapters five and six of populism as a mass ideology that speaks directly to the majority's intuitive understanding of politics, and I suggest that it also assumes the resemblance theory as a normative position in its claim to representation.

Ankersmit poses the question to resemblance theory of how to identify those most suitable to represent the people. What he sees as the obvious response is that "the kind of identity at stake in political representation is an identity of opinions and not of persons" (2002, p. 110). Therefore the elites deemed most worthy, educated and capable should be chosen. What would populists answer to this question? Populist ideology manifests itself in a denial that the elite are able to adequately represent the people; their use of social power is illegtimate. As I demonstrated with the construction of the populist cleavage in the preceding chapter, the elite's inherent immorality and self-serving motive disqualify them, and this is evident from their

inauthentic performances (which populist disruptions expose). When combined with populism's anti-elitism, resemblance theory therefore takes the form of a conflation of the people's opinions with the persons having them. Only those on the 'right' side of the cleavage can represent: the people and the populists, who are part of the people. This conflation speaks to what Ankersmit characterises as a "politically naïve electorate [that] will see all difference between itself and its representatives as an impermissible distortion" and political misrepresentation (ibid., p. 113). Though we might not like to think of our electorate as politically naïve, we saw in the previous chapter that both of the populist parties *construct* such a gap between the people and the elite and portray it as what Ankersmit termed "impermissible distortion" in the performance of their representative claims.

To overcome this naivety, Ankersmit argues that the substitution theory ought to coexist with the resemblance theory. The former posits that representatives must indeed incorporate the political opinions of voters but ought not to determine their decision making on them alone and should rather filter them through their "enlightened conscience" (Burke, quoted by Ankersmit, 2002, p. 111). This is the aesthetic gap that is at the heart of Ankersmit's normative theory of representation. At its core lies a tension between the two theories in the practice of representation. The process of representation involves walking a tightrope between direct mimesis – "the claims of the represented to become present on their own terms" (Coleman, 2011, p. 40) – and the elitist aesthetic act of constituting such claims as an alternative reality. It must be at once faithful to the wishes and identity of the represented and reconstruct them in a way that expresses the representative's own identity and unique claim. In the words of Laclau, "…it is the essence of the process of representation that the representative contributes to the identity of what is represented" (quoted in Coleman, 2011, p. 39). In this sense, full mimesis is an empirical impossibility in both communicative and political representation (as Magritte famously points out in his painting of a pipe, '*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*'), as we also saw in chapter two. In politics, the political representative can never transmit unfiltered the will of the people; nor should they, for this would result in crude majoritarianism.

Yet the aesthetic gap between resemblance and substitution is absent in the populist claim to be one of the people. Let us consider how this mode of representation is performatively achieved. The claim results in the populist mode of representation being performed through embodied identification with the people. The people's representatives have to look like or have a shared experience of the lives of the people in order to qualify as representatives. Such a mode of representation naturally requires symbolic performance that signals identification, and this performance in turn constitutes the people (and in doing so, it also legitimises and encourages political naivety). Populists reproduce the people in their own image by symbolically embodying them

In doing so, their portrayal of the people through embodiment is in fact not purely mimetic (as I initially suggested above). Populists do not look exactly like, or even try to look like, the people they claim to represent in such performances. Farage drinks pints but his similarity to blue-collar workers does not go much beyond that. The EFF's chief means of symbolic production, their domestic workers' uniforms, are the communist red of their party colour, matching their plastic miners' helmets in a mishmash of symbolic statements, and they clash somewhat with EFF leader Julius Malema's Gucci sunglasses. Rather than attempting pure mimesis, the populist embodiment of the people is a token, an invitation for constituents to enter their "representation-game" (Csigo, 2009). This invitation is delivered through a performance that relies on iconic means of symbolic production, such as clothing and pints, and simultaneously draws on shared background symbols. It constitutes the people in an implicitly antagonistic relationship to the elite: the British people drink pints, the elite claret; the South African people are honest, hard workers, the elite grey-suited traitors enriching themselves at the people's expense. I consider this process of representing the people in more detail below. What populists' self-representations aim for is a full merging of their projected performance with the received and mediated performances in which the aesthetic gap is absent.

The elite have now been excluded as appropriate representatives and I can briefly address the other side of this ambiguity in populist self-representation, namely populists' exceptionalism. This is the point where mimesis ends and substitution

begins. Populists' exceptionalism qualifies *them* and no other ordinary people to be representatives, for they have the ability to challenge the social power of the elite. Where ordinariness serves to reinforce the authenticity of the populist performance, extraordinariness augments the audience's feelings of efficacy. This extraordinariness, however, is unlike that of 'normal' representatives' enlightened conscience as suggested by Ankersmit (or so it claims to be). It is derived from populists' ability to see through the veil of deception that is the chief weapon of the establishment and inheres in the claim to truth-telling that emerged from my analysis in the previous chapter. Populists' exceptionalism lies in their supposed privileged epistemological position where only they have access to the truth. This claim is symbolised by disruptive performance as an act of exposure.

We have already seen in the previous chapter that a feature of populist ideology is the portrayal of the people as a totality and as homogenous. This unity of the people is not ontologically given. As I argued above, pure mimesis is an impossibility, for in the performative act of representation "political practices do not *express* the nature of social agents but, instead, *constitute* the latter" (Laclau, 2005b, p. 33). This makes the idea of the people inherently flexible and socio-politically specific. It is a constructed entity, often ambiguously defined to suit the democratic context and ambitions of populists. We also saw in chapters five and six that this constitutive function is in populism accompanied by a second one whereby the populist representative claim kills off ideology and constructs an alternative political spectrum wherein the people is unified. With reference to established liberal democracies, Ankersmit fears such a state of affairs where "all our individual (long-term) interests lose their specific contours and are dissolved into one comprehensive public interest". Then, as he reflects, "it is hard to see what work will be left for democratic politics in the absence of conflict" (2002, p. 127). He suggests that such a "plebiscitary" democratic politics would only require two non-ideological catch-all parties that citizens can choose from in their judgment of competency (ibid., p. 128). The mode of representation offered in the populist claim is even less welcome than the scenario painted by Ankersmit. The reality that the performance of this claim constitutes does indeed involve two such parties: the elite and the populists themselves. But the latter are the only true representatives of the people.

Before we are mired in cynicism as a result of this analysis, let us note the nature of the populist claim as a performance. As such it is constructed as a result of a dialectic between the populist representative and the represented. While it may be performative in its constitution of the people, such a construction is partly based on interaction with the audience. The representative and the represented are mutually constituted. The populist claim therefore speaks to people's real needs and concerns. As a mass ideology, this is especially the case with populism. Its constitutive function, meanwhile, inspires genuine feelings of empowerment, where there was little before, and can be a step towards democratic change and even improvement. And, of course, the projected performance of the populist representative claim, its essentialist cleavage and anti-pluralist evocation of the people is there for audiences to accept or reject, to receive on their own terms, or to ignore.

7.4 DISCUSSION

The cultural pragmatics approach to social performance reminds us that social actors are concerned with conveying meanings to others, and they do so through performance. To encourage their audiences to believe these meanings, they attempt to create an authentic performance by creating a shared understanding of their intentions. In other words, for the performance to be successful, the audience must believe that the content and intentions of the performance are honest and truthful so that they establish identification with the actor. Performers draw on a repertoire of collectively shared background symbols and texts to aid such identification, yet in re-presenting these texts, they necessarily add to and change their meaning in the process of performing them. We can therefore see a parallel between performance and the two notions of representation that I integrated in chapter two – aesthetic and political – for both performance and representation involve more than mimesis. This 'more' is developed through a mutually constitutive process with external context. In Alexander's model, we can see context playing into the process of performance through three functions. First, background symbols are context-specific resources for actors. Second, social powers constrain performances but are in authentic performances converted into part of the performer's symbolic repertoire. Third, performances in and of themselves construct their own context of interpretation and

through their enaction effect consequences upon their context. This is enlightening as to how comparative study might add to our understanding of populist communication. As I found was the case with ideology, it suggests a focus on process as the comparable element in different contexts.

In this sense the form and content of every performance are unique, and every performance potentially has a political function. Moreover, such a political function – the manifestation of ideology through performance – implies an intention to represent reality in the form of a distortion. As I argued in chapter five, such a distortion is a necessary and ubiquitous function of ideology and so does not necessarily signify an intention to *mis*represent or mislead. When we apply this perspective to the performance of political representation, the intention that lies behind the creative act of an ideological (re-)constitution of reality should be to represent the people's interests and not those of the representative's. The performance will be perceived as authentic if the political representative's values and beliefs are consistent with their performance; that is, if the representative believes that his ideology serves the people's interests and s/he faithfully manifests this ideology through performance. If the performance of representation is perceived as hollow and seen to be undertaken as a mere abuse of political norms and procedures with an intention to manipulate, it will come across as inauthentic.

A social performance perspective on populist communication is then able to deepen our understanding of how populist ideology manifests itself performatively and provides a link between populist ideology and a populist mode of representation that enables a nuanced and critical analysis. As a particularly emblematic manifestation of populist ideology, disruptive performance can be seen as a kind of meta-performance that dissects and undermines elite performance and renders it inauthentic. To achieve this, populists represent the elite as scripted, as having values and intentions at odds with their performance and as being distant from the people. Such disruptive performances are of course themselves performances that aim to construct authenticity through spontaneity, consistency and intimacy. They achieve this particularly effectively by combining disruption with identification with the people by means of embodiment.

These two key aspects of populist performance in turn construct the populist's relationships to the people and the elite and constitute a populist mode of representation. The latter aspect of their performance – identification with the people – suggests that the populist is simply a conductor of public opinion with no friction or transformation occurring in the process of political representation. Yet we have seen that this level of disintermediation in the form of pure mimesis is not possible, even if it is suggested by the populist mode of representation. Populist disruptive performances are themselves manifestations of populist ideology and, as such, they distort reality. The other side of a prototypical populist performance – exposure of elite performance through disruption and a claim to truth-telling – introduces a problematic essentialism that dismisses ideology and other differences of opinion as sources of disagreement in politics and establishes the populist representative as the only morally entitled one. In combination with the populist claim to identification with the people, this is a denial of populist disruption as an ideological performance altogether.

8. The Performance of the Populist Representative Claim: Empirical Analysis

Cape Town, 12 February 2015

The hubbub in parliament falls silent as President Jacob Zuma and his highly choreographed ceremonial procession slowly enter. Behind him walk the Usher of the Black Rod, whose official role is to accompany the procession, and the Serjeant-at-Arms, bearing the mace, a decorated rod that symbolises the authority of parliament. A traditional praise singer, clad in tribal costume, is chanting a poem. All MPs in the chamber and invited members of the audience and the press in the gallery rise. They know their designated roles. It is a well-established ritual and its form is rigidly adhered to; proceedings have not deviated once since its inception at the abolishment of Apartheid in 1994. Until today: members of the EFF refuse to rise. The focus of the ritual on the single purpose of the occasion – the president delivering his annual State of the Nation Address – they describe in a tweet as "that state of the nonsense" (EFF_tweet18).

Strasbourg, 1 July 2014

The official flag-raising ceremony opens the European Parliament for the season. A chamber orchestra is set up in the parliamentary chamber. As it starts playing Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, the European anthem, all MEPs in the chamber rise. Another well-established ritual, everybody here, too, knows the drill. But one group does not conform. Uncannily echoing their South African colleagues, the 24-strong team of newly elected UKIP MEPs turn their backs as the anthem plays. Such an act of protest is hitherto unheard of in the rigid practice of norms in Europe's largest democratic institution. Yet to UKIP, this ritual is also "nonsense" (UKIP_col2), a celebration of a federalist "fanaticism" (UKIP_press4) under the guise of ritual.

8.1 Introduction

UKIP and the EFF's disruptions are acts of exposure that collide with ritual in symbolically mediated claims: to the populist parties, the elite are deceiving the people and flouting democratic principles for self-serving ends, and they use ritual to

disguise it. UKIP and the EFF's claims about the role of political performance in representative democracy are closely tied to their respective attitudes to ideology and shaped by their available background symbolic resources. Both deride the elite for their impression management practices as such attempts at managing visibility result in inauthentic performances that, in turn, establish a false foundation for the public's feelings of democratic empowerment. In this chapter I explore the populist attitude to political performance and the role they attribute to it in representative democracy. Yet I do not just take these claims at face value but rather analyse them as performances in and of themselves. With this analysis I address the research question, **how does disruptive performance communicatively manifest a populist mode of representation?** My contention is that the two populist parties' claims *about* performance contribute to their shared epistemological assumption of the existence of objective truth that I demonstrated in chapter six. Through the performance *of* this claim, it translates into a populist mode of representation that redefines truth as authenticity.

In my exploration of the above question I focus on norms and rituals as sites that lend themselves to symbolic action through disruption. In all the disruptive events that I have analysed, norms and rituals emerge as sites of performative and discursive struggle between the elite and the populist parties. To the elite, their norms and rituals are endowed with a concrete purpose that is necessary to the functioning of democracy. To the populist parties, such elite practices are masquerades that cover up the self-serving intentions of the elite. Since a felicitous performance must lead "those to whom their actions and gestures are directed to accept their motives and explanations as a reasonable account" (Alexander, 2004b, p. 530), undermining the motives that underlie elite performances renders them inauthentic. The populist parties' claims do exactly that. By portraying the elite as immoral and self-interested performers, they de-fuse elite performance and offer an alternative mode of representation based on authenticity and shared identity. At the same time, the disruption of ritual is particularly noteworthy and spectacular for questioning a performance that is usually taken for granted. The populist disruption of ritual is a form of meta-performance that seeks to expose the ritual as 'mere performance', a masquerade, and simultaneously garners attention for the populist performers.

I approach the question above by investigating the dimensions of the representative claim: self-representation and representation of the people. We saw in the previous chapter that these two dimensions are not easily disentwined in the case of populism in particular since populists often evoke the people through embodiment and identification. Moreover, both the people and the populists themselves are often implicitly defined in negative terms through evocations of the elite. I therefore start out by exploring the populist claims about elite performance. As was the case in chapter six with respect to ideology, the populist conceptions of political performance are often reductionist and do not correspond to my own. In the following I therefore use terms such as 'rhetoric', 'theatrics' and 'masquerade' to denote the populist parties' conceptions of performance and retain the term 'performance' for my own analytical use. I then turn to more direct references to populists' self-representation and evocation of the people: claims about their own lack of impression management and their self-representation as authentic, their embodiment of the people in claims to ordinariness and their extraordinary status as truth tellers. I conclude with a discussion about the populist mode of representation that has emerged from the analysis and the implications for the representation of the people.

8.2 ELITE PERFORMANCE IN THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM

Political rituals have an unquestionable status as successful elite performances. Disrupting them can consequently be particularly forceful in performative terms and garner great attention. A core argument in UKIP's and the EFF's claims about the deceit inherent in elite performance and ritual is the ways in which the elite use them as image management tools to present a front that hides reality. When the ulterior motives of such elite performances are exposed by populist disruptive action, they are rendered inauthentic and the elite's performances of representation are undermined. In the next three sections I explore, first, the two parties' claims as to the elite's image management practices; second, their claims of the inauthenticity of such performances; and, third, UKIP's and the EFF's claims that the lack of closeness between elites and people contribute to the elite's unrepresentativeness.

8.2.1 THE ELITE'S IMAGE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: POLITICAL THEATRE AND OPPORTUNISM

Strategic self-representation – the application of a filter between, on the one hand, their real intentions and beliefs and, on the other, their outward performance – epitomises the populist representation of the elite's performance of their value systems (or lack of them). But it is also the currency of politics. In both the EFF's and UKIP's claims, political norms and rituals are the elite's ultimate means of constructing and exercising power and maintaining their hold over the people through practices of false consciousness: they are performances of deception designed to satisfy the media and dupe the people into compliance. UKIP and the EFF therefore portray institutional rituals as masquerades that undermine the democratic function of parliament. They see such elite performances as carefully staged events designed to control the elite's front and hide the unpalatable reality by offering naturalised spectacle.

The moments in a ritual where its orchestration works so visibly, where the audience know exactly what to expect and all assembled actors perform in perfect unison, are the ideal points of disrupting it. When the highly choreographed and very formal procession of the president enters the parliamentary chamber (EFF_live1), all participants – except the EFF – unquestioningly perform their parts and rise for the president. But the EFF remain sitting. Their symbolic act signifies a refusal to conform to norms based on the premise of visibility management, especially where, in the case of Zuma, the ritual serves to gloss over deeper democratic and constitutional issues. In Alexander's terms, by pointing to the ritual's nature as a performance of social power through a refusal to act out the script assigned to them, the EFF's symbolic actions turn social power into a performative resource. In doing so, they de-fuse the elite's performance of the SONA ritual and reveal it as inauthentic because it is inconsistent with the underlying reality and values of the elite.

In the case of the South African elite, the importance that the elite lend to the occasion of the SONA is such that the adherence to ritualised practices and norms carries greater weight than rules and laws in the conduct of politics. As the chair of the proceedings of the SONA, the speaker's focus is on the purpose of the occasion and its form being rigidly adhered to. These are her justifications for her dismissal of the EFF

MPs' many interruptions: "It is important that this sitting focuses on the business of the day, and that is for the president to deliver the state of the nation address" (EFF_live1). This to the EFF is an abuse of social power and an excuse to keep tight control of the government's managed front. By portraying the ritual of the SONA as a masquerade, the EFF seek to burst its felicity bubble. Their symbolic actions of refusing to conform to the formalities of the ritual point to its meaninglessness and discrepancy with political reality. It does not represent the *real* state of the nation: "…many live in homes they do not own, they drive cars they do not own, and use household furniture they do not own… This is the state of the nation" (EFF_press3). Such accusations of misrepresenting reality feed into – and constitute – the perception that Ankersmit's (2002, p. 113) "politically naïve" electorate have of political representation.

The EFF refuse to accept such hollow norms and ritual as a legitimate foundation for social power. In response to the speaker's insistence on the purpose of the ceremonial occasion of the SONA, Malema champions the rules of parliament as the manifestation of democratic principles and attributes them value above norms and ritual: "it is within my right to speak as a member of this House, and remind you that it is incorrect of you to want to suggest that when the President speaks, you suspend the Rules" (EFF_live1). In doing so, he directly challenges and reattributes meaning to the purpose that the speaker lends to the occasion: "…we *are* doing the business of today" (EFF_live1; italics indicate verbal emphasis). The EFF's "business of today" is the pressing question of Zuma evading corruption charges and of fulfilling their duty as opposition of holding him to account.

A discursive struggle over the meaning of the SONA ritual and over the government's exercise of social power more broadly is taking place. It is norms against rules. When the discursive struggle heats up after a series of challenges by the EFF and dismissals by the speaker, the speaker accuses the EFF of "abusing" the rules:

Speaker: I am not allowing you honourable members because I have explained to you that you are actually abusing...

Malema: - Which Rule are you using, my honourable Speaker? Which Rule are you using to deny members to raise a point of order? They are protected by the Rules. You cannot be emotional about it. Point us to the Rule which gives you the power to deny us points of order. (EFF_live1)

In denoting the EFF's rule-bound behaviour an abuse of the rules, the speaker suggests an important analytical point: where rules and institutional frameworks usually constitute the external boundaries of a performance in the form of social power (Alexander, 2006, p. 36) – that is, they restrict and confine the performance – the EFF turn them into a resource; they become part of their script. In response to the speaker, Malema challenges the foundation of her social power. He constructs a binary between rules and the speaker's "emotional" behaviour and creates a chain of equivalence between the elite, irrationality and ritual. In this claim, the rules championed by the EFF are logical, rational and the means of conducting democratic business and are being undermined by the ritual of the SONA.

When the speaker finally expels all EFF MPs from the House, the EFF turn their legal argument into a moral one by referring to the speaker's lack of moral superiority: "Honourable Speaker, you are not a bishop! I am appealing to your conscience!" (EFF_live1). Not only does the speaker have no legal foundation for her use of social power, neither does she have a moral one. Taking the chain of equivalence one step further, an EFF MP adds, "Hopefully you still have a revolutionary conscience! [Interjections]" (EFF_live1). He thereby associates revolutionary politics and the background symbol of the freedom struggle against Apartheid with moral behaviour. The irrationality and illegality of ritual become equated with immorality and deprivation of freedom. The binary that the EFF construct through this struggle is no longer simply norms versus rules; it is now norms, immorality and authoritarianism versus rules, morality and liberation. Who would win?

The discursive struggle reaches a new level when the speaker's use of social power in her attempt to confine and set the boundaries of the EFF's performance also, like institutional rules, becomes part of the EFF's script. In her attempts to impose discipline by reference to norms and procedure, the EFF claim, the speaker is intending to shut down opposing voices in a partisan and authoritarian manner. She therefore uses a strategy of masquerading behind procedure. In the performance of this claim, the EFF constitute the imposition of discipline as an illicit performance that they liken to the behaviour of the Apartheid regime. By implication, their own position is associated with the background symbols (Alexander, 2006, p. 33) of liberation and freedom fighting. Liberation, as we saw, is a central element in the public's understanding of democracy. The interpretation of the central populist concept of sovereignty as liberation is then the foundation for the EFF's performance of their mass ideology. As the EFF turn the limiting, constrictive qualities of social power into the central background symbol that their ideology builds on, they gain a resource for the expression of their mass ideology and for the constitution of a moral cleavage on its basis. They "defend and stand for what is *right*" (EFF_press7; my emphasis).

The argument of the elite's immoral use of ritual as an image management tool is part of a broader claim about the role of performance and its relationship to ideology in South African democracy. The EFF berate the "hollow recitals of the freedom charter by the ANC", which are "pure farce" (EFF_press2). Their proof of the elite's inauthenticity lies in the inconsistency between the strong South African background symbol of the Freedom Charter and the ANC's actual world views. In fact, the EFF claim, the ANC is "implementing a neo-liberal, right wing and capitalist programme... and any talk of the Freedom Charter is meant to *mislead* the people of South Africa" (ibid.; my emphasis). Such behaviour is immoral, and the ANC's motives are not genuine, for "we know… that the ANC will never nationalise Mines [as stated in the Freedom Charter] because majority of its senior leaders are privately benefitting from privately owned Mines" (EFF_press2). With such disingenuous motives, their performance is exposed as inauthentic. Moreover, in South African politics, such false, empty evocation of the Freedom Charter equates to democratic blasphemy, a betrayal of the ideas underlying the struggle for independence, which in turn is a betrayal of the people and their freedom. With an essentialist moral basis for their claim, the EFF

portray their own mass ideology as having sole ownership of the background symbol of the freedom struggle and the associated notion of liberation. In other words, in the EFF's claim, the elite are democratic pretenders while the EFF themselves performatively constitute their ideology as the only *right* one.

Like the EFF, UKIP expose European Parliamentary norms and rituals as staged image management events that are detrimental to democratic representation. At the EP's opening ceremony, UKIP's act of protest of turning their backs to the chamber orchestra playing the EU anthem is a striking echo of the EFF's refusal to stand for President Zuma. With their symbolic act, UKIP not only denounce what they perceive as the hidden meaning of the ritual – the fanatic federalism that I found in UKIP's claim in chapter six – but also the ritual performance of the anthem as a "stiff and stagey ceremony" (UKIP_col2). Their disruption reveals it as a spectacle designed to manage and control the elite's image at the expense of "stand[ing] up for our people" (UKIP_tweet5).

In UKIP's claim, the relationship between the elite's ideology and their performance as a means to image management is a complex one. In a newspaper column, Farage describes the EP opening ceremony as "this rampant EU nationalism, with its clear disregard for the recent Euro election results [which saw a record number of Eurosceptic MEPs elected]" (UKIP_col2). He portrays the EP's performance of ritual as presenting ideological "fanaticism" (UKIP_press4) in palatable form to an unsuspecting public. The nature of ritual helps the medicine go down. Farage's bone is with the false consciousness that is being imposed through the EP ritual and the way the elite's performance of ritual is used to hide EP fanaticism in plain view. This ideology is an absurd form of "anti-democratic zealotry" (UKIP_live4). Its "nationalism" is on a scale of extremism comparable to Nazism, as he suggests in a supposedly offhand comment to a fellow MEP: "If this were carried out in Germany it would be considered too nationalistic" (UKIP_vid1; see also Figure 3.7). The background symbol of Nazism clearly communicates the value system underlying the EP ritual as deeply immoral.

Yet in UKIP's claim their disruption does not only aim to reveal the ritual as a performance of fanaticism by the elite. Indeed, Paul Nuttall points out the emptiness of the elite's nationalist means of symbolic production – the hoisting of the flag,

ceremonial military parades, playing of the European anthem. UKIP representatives, in contrast, are true representatives of the people: "We stand up for our people, not the EU flag and anthem" (UKIP_tweet5). 'Proper representation' and the ritual of the EP opening ceremony and its symbols are here portrayed as mutually exclusive, for the EP symbols do not correlate with reality as symbols ought. In fact, their nationalism is "faux nationalism" (UKIP_press1): the EU has no national people to celebrate and hypocritically condemn others' shows of nationalism (UKIP_col2). While the EU's extremist ideology is portrayed as immoral and nonsensical, it is also directly detrimental to "our people" (UKIP_tweet5). The means of symbolic production it is performed through are not symbols of democratic representation; nor do they conform to the requirements of communicative representation, for their signifier and signified are incompatible. Federalist rituals are therefore consciously misleading, a guise for extremism and a means of portraying unpalatable values as innocent through the misuse of symbolic action. The purpose of UKIP's disruption is to reveal this inauthenticity.

8.2.2 THE ELITE'S LACK OF AUTHENTICITY: "HOLLOW WORDS SPOKEN IN STRATEGIC ORATION"

In a climate where new weapons of visibility make self-representations increasingly fragile, it is politicians' authenticity that is at stake. We have seen that the moral opposition between elite and people that forms the basis of populist ideology makes the authenticity of the elite a prime target of populist attack. Populists expose elite performance as unspontaneous, calculated and aimed at mediation. They thereby engender mistrust of the elite's intentions and a suspicion of inconstancy and fabrication in their mediated fronts, which prevents intimacy with the public. These are the very qualities – spontaneity, intimacy and consistency – that I argued in the preceding chapter comprise performances of authenticity. I now interrogate this claimed inauthenticity of the elite's practices of image and impression management in more detail.

UKIP's and the EFF's representative claims about the calculated fronts of elites are founded on the view that a politician's performance must accurately and consistently reflect their true beliefs. The two parties identify inconsistencies between the elite's

use of background symbols and their value system, their pompous posturing, and the rehearsed nature of their performance. Again and again the two parties point out how the elite's scriptedness and concern with image management above sincerity mislead the people. A UKIP MEP in an interview I conducted put it that, elite politicians have:

> ...a clear message that has been tested and distilled over a period of time and it is – it is as though everything that is said is rehearsed... politicians by definition apply filters to what they say before they say it, they think about how a newspaper will report the words that they are using... they deliver a speech that is very scripted and *they* are the ones putting on an act quite often (UKIP MEP, 2017; italics denote verbal emphasis).

The UKIP MEP associates scripted behaviour with filtering. The implication is that the purpose of the elite's communication with the public is persuasion and gaining media attention, not keeping citizens adequately and truthfully informed. Scripted performances – when exposed as such – create distance between representatives and people, a lack of intimacy and trust, because they suggest that the representative is not performing his or her true self. In UKIP's claim, their exposure of the scriptedness of the elite's image management practices is therefore undertaken for the sake of the people. When UKIP claim that Nigel Farage "exposes EU hypocrisy and faux outrage" (UKIP_press10), they are pointing to the elite's inauthenticity. This is part of 'the truth' that populists seek to expose. In other words, insincerity in the form of inconsistency between the elite's performance and underlying values and motives does not only amount to inauthenticity in the populist claim. Given the moral nature of the populist claim to impartiality and representation, an inauthentic performance amounts to deception and untruthfulness. It erodes the foundations of representative democracy.

Like UKIP, the EFF criticise the scripted nature of Zuma's SONA in implicit contrast to their own spontaneous performance: "Zuma [must] not read but must speak and only refer to notes. He must not read to us. We're not in Sunday school" (EFF_tweet25). The lack of spontaneity in the elite's scripted behaviour signals an attempt to hide their real selves, their backstage behaviour, in an attempt at impression management. Exposing this scriptedness engenders mistrust of the elite's intentions and beliefs and

prevents any kind of intimacy with the public. In this respect, however, the EFF's claim differs from UKIP's. The elite do not lack shared experience with the people. Rather, the new black elite in South Africa have enriched themselves at the expense of their own people, that is, black South Africans. In the EFF's claim, the socio-economic gulf in South Africa and the high levels of institutionalised corruption go to the extent of the elite literally robbing the people of their rights and of their resources. In the next section I consider the different representations of the elite's distance from the people in the two parties' claims.

8.2.3 THE ELITE'S UNREPRESENTATIVENESS: MISLEADING MISREPRESENTATIONS

So far we have seen that both UKIP and the EFF suggest that the elite's representative relationship to the people is constructed through inauthentic image management practices. In making this claim, the two parties de-fuse the elite's performance of political representation. If the populist parties' own performances of de-fusion are felicitous, they undermine the elite's relationship to the people. I now consider how the two parties supplement this performance with the claim that the elite are unrepresentative because of their lack of closeness to the people. Understanding this claim gets us closer to pinning down the nature of the populist mode of representation.

In chapter six I demonstrated how both UKIP and the EFF accuse the elite of being removed from the people, in UKIP's case due to a cultural schism, and in the EFF's case due to betrayal. As we have seen, UKIP's anti-institutionalism means that they link the culture of self-obsessive "big politics" (UKIP_live1) to the institution of the EU itself. They see it as unnecessarily mediating the relationship between the people and their national representatives and, in doing so, weakening responsiveness and efficacy. In UKIP's claim, the European Parliament is characterised by "hyper-controlled and fastidiously regulated dreary procedures… [and the] bleakly beige and militaristic exercise" of rules and norms (UKIP_col1). Not exactly the epitome of listening and responsiveness. This is the meaning projected by UKIP's disruptive performances when they turn the social power embodied in the institutional setting of the EP into a means of symbolic production.

In UKIP's claim, the EU's structural lack of closeness to the people also takes the form of a lack of identification between the people and the elite that disqualifies the elite as representatives. For instance, we saw previously Farage provocatively accuse his colleagues of living in a "bubble" (UKIP_press6) and not having any shared life experience with the people they claim to represent. In Farage's claim the elite's lack of familiarity with the lives of ordinary people results in a chasm that entirely separates the EU elite and their project from the interests of the people and prevents the elite from seeing their own lack of representative capacity. In this claim, the elite's lack of resemblance to the people is a sign of a representative gap that cannot be bridged – a diagnosis that Farage shares with Ankersmit, as I discussed in the previous chapter. But Farage demands identification between elite and people in terms of life experience – and not just opinions – as a solution. This is a particular interpretation of the resemblance theory that departs from Ankersmit's argument as it conflates the people's opinions with their identity. He wants representatives to 'perform the people', so to speak, not to act on behalf of them.

When Farage further connects the lack of resemblance to deceit, he represents the elite's interests as entirely at odds with those of the people and as morally tainted. The elite are set on pursuing their interests "by stealth, by deception, without ever telling the truth" (UKIP_live1) at the expense of democratic representation. UKIP MEP (and very-short-lived party leader) Diane James makes this behaviour explicit in her portrayal of elite performance in a comment to the chamber as a,

> total misrepresentation of facts and issues… and misleading interpretation of history, UK economics and EU evolution… political theatre, histrionics and political opportunism at full throttle by the Europhiles, and all because the United Kingdom has chosen to leave the European Union. (UKIP_live2)

The issue here is not only that the elite's performance of representation is based on deceit. They are deliberately misleading the people.

While UKIP connect the problem of inadequate elite representation with political institutions, the EFF claim that it resides in the corrupt elite itself and is maintained

through authoritarian abuses of social power rather than through institutional bureaucracy. Unlike UKIP, the EFF champion institutions as means of achieving responsiveness and empowerment; democratic institutions are strong background symbols in the South African context. Malema claims, "We're not going to bus people to parliament. We've been elected to represented [sic] them in parliament" (EFF_tweet12). He critiques the ANC's practice of constructing false impressions of public support for parliamentary debates by transporting busloads of cheering citizens into parliament for the sake of appearing popular in media coverage. Instead, he claims, he will rely on the institution of representative democracy to deliver the people's wishes. In the EFF's claim, it is not representative democracy as an institution that is inefficacious; the root of the problem is that the elite are corrupting it by pandering to the media.

A further difference between UKIP's and the EFF's claims as to the elite's lack of representative capacity lies in where they locate the problem of the elite's lack of closeness to the people. Both parties strengthen their claims to the elite's distance from the people by pointing to a missing bond of trust as well as of communication. However, in UKIP's case, this non-existent bond is, as we have seen, based on a combination of immorality and a cultural schism: the elite live in a bubble and have no experience of the lives of ordinary people, neither do they wish to have it. In the EFF's case, in contrast, the bond has been broken by a betrayal of their own people – that is, black South Africans, "those who fought… for political freedom so abused by Zuma and company today" (EFF_live1).

In the EFF's claim, ritual is the elite's means of using social power to conceal authoritarian behaviour and ill-gotten gains. Yet it is not necessarily ritual in and of itself that they are opposed to. It is ritual being used as masquerade or as a disguise for ideology, when the performance of ritual is inconsistent with the values and principles that underlie it. This becomes evident when Malema argues for the importance of the presidential oath by reference to the rituals surrounding it: he attributes the oath importance *due to* the rituals:

> And that oath of office, the way it is so important. There is a special day
> where people get convened throughout South Africa to gather, on the
> south lawns of the Union building. Where a president on that day
> specially takes an oath of office. That's how important it is. Everything
> stops. (EFF_conf3)

In the EFF's argument, if ritual denotes such import, it is crucial that it is performed with integrity, that its meaning is honoured; in other words, that it is authentic. Otherwise the efficacy it inspires is established on false premises. As is the case with President Zuma in their claim.

In the two parties' claims, this status of ritual differs so that the claims retain their internal coherence. Malema's comment above associates the sacrosanct nature of the oath with the office of the president as a democratic institution and contrasts it with Zuma's sacrilegious behaviour as an individual member of the elite. Rituals are institutional and thus manifest central democratic principles, and the South African elite abuse them, just as they do ideology. UKIP denounce any ritual undertaken on behalf of the institution of the EU by virtue of the illegitimacy of the institutions themselves and the ideology they espouse. Despite their differences on the role of institutions, the two parties then share a view of performance as not bad in itself but as abused by the elite as a way to disguise their real motives and manipulate the people into subscribing to a false consciousness. In both cases, the elite's performance of institutionalised political ritual is therefore undemocratic and should be exposed as inauthentic.

Much of what I have explored so far – the two parties' claims that the elite are more concerned about managing their image than with serving the people – centres on the inauthenticity of the elite's performance of representation. We have seen that UKIP and the EFF share a representation of the elite as deceitful performers whose frontstage behaviour is inconsistent with their backstage values and whose motives are not what they appear to be. As is the case with the EFF, UKIP's distrust of ritual is symptomatic of a more fundamental view of the relationship between performance and ideology in representative democracy where elites engage in political theatre for the purpose of misleading the people. If the elite's portrayal of political reality is in fact

false consciousness, any sense of efficacy residing in the people is based on false premises: They are "liv[ing] with a lie" (EFF_conf3).

8.3 PERFORMING THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM: SELF-REPRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

Populists' self-representations are evoked in stark contrast to the elite's inauthentic pandering to the media through image management practices. Their evocation of the people is in turn constituted largely through identification and self-representation. The populist mode of representation is thus performed through an intricate web of relational identities, roles and motives. I now look at how populists in their own self-representations – and thereby representations of the people – refute each of the charges they have levied against the elite, yet somehow perform these claims in ways that achieve what the elite had ultimately set out to do in the first place. First, they deny all practices of image management, yet they obtain control of their visibility. Second, they acquire such visibility management through inherently authentic performances. Third, they justify their roles as representatives through two contradictory claims. These form an ambiguous yet effective form of self-representation that is united by the theme of disintermediation: on the one hand, a claim to embodiment and self-representation as ordinary and, on the other hand, a claim to truth-telling and self-representation as extraordinary.

8.3.1 POPULIST IMAGE MANAGEMENT

We have seen so far that both populist parties express concern about the effects upon representative democracy of the elite's impression management, inauthenticity and misrepresentations of reality. Given that the two parties represent themselves as transparent truth tellers, they deny any impression management of their own. Yet, as Goffman (1959) holds, everyone performs. Moreover, their own performances are, by the very nature of performance, oriented towards an audience where impression management and visibility are essential qualities.

Deriding the elite for their false performances of social power aimed at controlling visibility, both parties deny any practices of visibility management themselves: "We're not there to impress you (media)", tweet the EFF (EFF_tweet23). They even portray any kind of pandering to the media as incompatible with principled democratic practice, constructing a binary between the two: "We shouldn't chase headlines. We

must stick to the principle" (EFF_tweet24). Freedom from the artifice of mediated politics, in this claim, creates the opportunity to deal with pressing political issues and pursue democratic principles.

Indeed, it is such principles of democratic accountability and truth that both parties claim are the motivation for their disruptions. While political norms mask the undemocratic intentions of the elite, the disruption of norms is an act of truth-telling. Farage makes a point of paying homage to truth, not norms, when he is reprimanded by the EP chair for breaking the norms of acceptable political speech:

> Tajani: This Parliament has institutional functions, as does the Commission. Out of institutional respect for the Commission, but also as a result of the Commission's precedent, we need to be polite please, so thank you [shouts from chamber].
>
> Farage: And out of institutional respect, President, to the truth, perhaps you will understand and agree with me that within the European form of law-making it is the unelected Commission that has the sole right to propose legislation. If I'm wrong in saying that, you can throw me out of this Parliament right here, right now, this afternoon [scattered applause].
> (UKIP_live4)

As Farage champions the 'institution of truth' and himself as its voice, he dismisses the undemocratic institution of the EU. Its norms and rule of law are an illegitimate basis of its social power, and the chairperson and his reprimand give an inauthentic performance of this power. He thereby turns the chairperson's attempt at exercising social power into a resource in a move that echoes the EFF's utilisation of the speaker's attempt at discipline. This strategy is inherent to disruptive performance and manages to communicate a sophisticated and complex democratic claim in very clear and accessible symbolic terms. It simultaneously overcomes the restrictions put on the performance, symbolically communicates the illegitimacy of the elite's power, and makes a claim to perform on principled grounds and be motivated by principles rather than by a visibility-seeking strategy.

While the two parties deny practices of image management that compromise their principles for the sake of capturing media attention or complying with institutional norms, they do attract media attention and garner visibility. Their silent, simple acts of turning their backs or refusing the stand are at once symbolically clear statements of protest and challenge the established structure of meaning-making. On the morning after the EP opening ceremony, most newspapers feature a large image of the quietly protesting UKIP MEPs. Likewise, the simple, visual symbolism of the British flags planted on UKIP MEPs' desks in the EP rarely fails to get them pictured in the press (UKIP_news6, UKIP_news9). Farage's provocations are designed around memorable phrases and metaphors that break norms and thereby trigger a reprimand and subsequent media coverage: accusations of a "stitch-up" at the election of Martin Schultz as EP chair and the various denigrating digs at his MEP colleagues that we have seen in the past chapters all feature prominently in media coverage (UKIP_news2; UKIP_news4; UKIP_news8; UKIP_news10; UKIP_news17). In the South African case, the EFF's initial symbolic act of refusing to stand up is only one small element of a large-scale production, and newspapers' focus is therefore on the even more dramatic "chaos" and "pandemonium" (e.g. EFF_news1; EFF_news2; EFF_news3; EFF_news4; EFF_news5) that occur upon their forced expulsion from parliament, which I return to shortly. First, however, I consider the importance of authenticity in the two parties' self-representations.

8.3.2 AUTHENTIC SELF-REPRESENTATION: "*THEY* ARE THE ONES PUTTING ON AN ACT"

The attempt to hide their real motives and values is at the heart of the elite's duplicity that populists seek to expose while they claim that their own performances are based on principle, not pretence. In both parties' claims, the lack of consistency between the elite's performance and their actual values and ideology betrays their inauthenticity. In contrast to these accusations of disingenuous and deceiving performances, the two populist parties claim that their own performances are unscripted and thus authentic. Yet their performances are pre-planned and highly orchestrated. So how do they achieve the impression of innate authenticity? This question is central to the ways in which populists use disruptive performance to project their mode of representation. To answer this question, I look at the two parties' performances of spontaneity,

intimacy and consistency which together comprise acts of authenticity (Enli, 2015, chap. 6).

Staged spontaneity can at times seem more spontaneous than 'real' spontaneity (Enli, 2015, p. 10; see also Goffman, 1959, pp. 8–9). Indeed, the EFF's disruption of the SONA is planned months in advance, even, as we have seen, to the extent of anticipating the moves of the ANC and building them into the performed narrative. Yet their performance comes across as entirely spontaneous. Though UKIP's performances are less elaborately planned, they are also obviously staged. They reuse key phrases to build up their performance through different modes of communication, such as their description of the EP opening ceremony mentioned above as a performance of "rampant EU nationalism", which is repeated by Farage (UKIP_col2), UKIP MEP Jonathan Arnott (UKIP_press1), UKIP's Twitter account (UKIP_tweet10) and a UKIP promotional video (UKIP_vid1) over a period of a week. In both UKIP's and the EFF's cases, however, disruption as a mode of performance has an inherently spontaneous quality that overcomes its staged nature: it suggests that the breaking of norms is a worthwhile sacrifice to express oneself in accordance with one's true self (Enli, 2015, pp. 10–11; Healey, 2010, p. 530), that is, to be authentic. The two parties' disruptions are therefore often accompanied by claims to martyrdom and self-sacrifice: "No amount of violence and harassment will stop us from taking over this country on behalf of the people", state the EFF (EFF_press3), while Farage describes UKIP's "People's Army" as "combatant" (UKIP_col1). These appearances of dedicated spontaneity are enhanced by their contrast with the scripted and calculated performances of the elite in the two parties' claims.

Both parties achieve moments of intimacy by showcasing backstage behaviour on the front stage. They purposely do not clean up their acts. Indeed, the performance of backstage behaviour is integral to both disruption as a norm breaking act and to the performance of ordinariness and intimacy. Moreover, such backstage behaviour at once achieves authenticity and media attention. Malema's speeches are often charged with emotion. And what could be more intimate than his complaint against the security guards who evict them from parliament that "the bastard is squeezing my balls" (EFF_tweet26)? This disruption of the norms of political speech signals intimacy

through an act of self-disclosure and disinhibition in similar ways to social media performances (see, for example, Miller, 2011, pp. 178–80). The performance of backstage behaviour at once creates a sense of intimacy with the people and demonstrates consistency between the populist parties' real selves and their public performances. Bringing backstage behaviour to the front stage thus signifies consistency between a politician's truly held values and beliefs and their public performance. Where we saw above that both parties berate the elite for their hollow rhetoric and its lack of consistency with their beliefs, and that they claim to exhibit such consistency themselves, their disruptive acts achieve this performatively: disruptions are performative manifestations of populist ideology.

The two parties reiterate this consistency between their performance and ideology in their claims. UKIP portray their own performance as sincere and consistent with their values: UKIP MEPs claim to be "a team who believe in what they say", not changing their "accents and grit" for the sake of impressing the media (UKIP_col1). Rather, their own charisma is "innate" (UKIP MEP, 2017). The populist case for authenticity hinges not so much on a lack of performance as on demonstrating consistency between a performance and the world view and identity that underlie it. In describing their disruption of the EP opening ceremony, UKIP thus admit to performing symbolic action, but, crucially, it is sincere: "Our actions were at once symbolic, and one hundred per cent sincere." (UKIP_col1). They deny that their disruption is motivated by the desire to create visibility and rather claim that it is a genuine expression of their beliefs. They contrast this consistency between their values and their performance with the "hollow words spoken in strategic oration by a Prime Minister desperate to garner votes" (UKIP_col1).

UKIP's argument of the elite's "hollow words" is echoed by the EFF, almost word for word, when they criticise Zuma's "hollow recitals" of the Freedom Charter (EFF_press2). The EFF's expression of their own beliefs is pure and genuine, a direct view of their souls, as Malema suggests when sharing a meme and implicitly compares himself to Joseph (of Biblical fame): "…The tenbrothers looked at Joseph and saw a useless dreamer!... How wrong were all of them!... Be encouraged by what God sees in you!!!" (EFF_tweet27). The EFF's performance reflects their belief in their "radical and

militant programme" which they "unapologetically pursue" (EFF_press2) through disruptive and protest action. They legitimise this belief with its "true resonance with the people of South Africa" (EFF_press2) and their own identification with the people. While the EFF portray their own ideology as resonant with the people, UKIP (who, as we saw in chapter six, claim not to be ideologically coloured) represent their values as actually *being* those of the people: UKIP are the "unadulterated" "voice of discontented Britain" and represent "what you believe in" (UKIP_col1). As representatives they claim to represent the unfiltered opinions of the people. This unfeasible claim is to resemblance, without the substitution theory component of 'enlightened consciousness' that Ankersmit argues is necessary to mediate the opinions of the majority. Yet, as we have seen, UKIP justify their ability to serve by, first, not resemblance of opinion but identification through embodiment, and, second, their extraordinariness. I return to these themes as my argument progresses.

The relative centrality of the EFF's host ideology mitigates their populist component compared to UKIP's mode of representation. They portray their host ideology as imaginative and inspirational. It is a value system that the people will aspire and subscribe to because it relates to their lives, rather than being intrinsic to it, as *derived from* the people, like UKIP claim their ideology is. Despite the different views on ideology, the EFF and UKIP both represent authenticity as a democratic and moral right, a normative demand; authenticity is what ought to characterise democratic representation.

In the case of the EFF, mainstream media even explicitly note this consistency between ideology – The EFF's "clear plan and a firm programme" – and performance – the "certainty in the mood and voice of the EFF" (EFF_news6). Moreover, the importance of such mediated consistency is also evident from the performative struggle between the ANC and the EFF over authenticity. In their respective pre-SONA press conferences, subsequently reported by the press, Zuma blames the EFF for having "nothing to offer but to disrupt Parliament" (EFF_news7). Zuma thereby disconnects the EFF's pending disruptive performance at the SONA from any underlying ideology. Zuma's portrayal of the EFF's performance as 'hollow' strategically undermines the EFF's performance of authenticity. In the same report, Malema is quoted as responding "...He thinks we are

playing. We are going to show him who we are". Malema thereby not only weights the democratic importance of the EFF's act but also connects it to their identity – who they are – to demonstrate that these values are deeply held. While this struggle over the signification of disruption serves the newspaper's conflict frame well, it also highlights the importance of consistency between performance and values in the mediated performance of authenticity.

8.3.3 REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE THROUGH EMBODIMENT

As we saw above, the two parties accuse the elite of not only scriptedness and a lack of spontaneity but also of being distant from the people, either due to a cultural schism, as in the case of UKIP, or due to betrayal, as in the EFF case. For their own parts, UKIP and the EFF establish intimacy with the people performatively. I have already briefly noted how they embody the people in their disruptive performances. Such performances of embodiment symbolically make claims to identification and are the parties' chief means of constituting the people. The EFF signal closeness through resemblance. They quite literally don the uniform of the workers they serve as representatives. UKIP perform their claim of resemblance by using the language of 'the common man'. Farage, for instance, peppers his speeches with expressions such as "wanna" and "gonna" which are otherwise formally enunciated by elite politicians and addresses the chair of the EP with the colloquialism "mate" (UKIP_live4).

UKIP enhance their resemblance to the people by contrasting it to the gulf between the silent majority and the elite who is "stuck in its own lavish bubble detached from reality" (UKIP_press6). We saw in chapter six how Farage, for instance, described the newly elected team of UKIP MEPs as having the lived experience of ordinary people. Even if few of us have ever met an "umbrella maker of Gypsy extraction" (UKIP_col1), UKIP's evocation of the people is as ordinary, hard-working and leading individual lives with their own undisturbed identities, and UKIP MEPs are just like them. Moreover, their resemblance to – or rather, identification with – the people is unspoilt: "the people's army has not been carefully engineered by an imaginative press office" (UKIP_col1). This quib at 'spin doctoring' associates the elite's lack of resemblance with the symbiosis between politics and the media, which UKIP portray as sacrificing the substantiveness of democratic practice on the altar of visibility. Image management is

an ulterior motive that results in the political elite's misrepresentation of their true identity and diverts attention away from what political representation ought to entail. UKIP MEPs' qualifications as representatives therefore consist in identification with the people and a lack of artifice. Identification and authenticity are the two qualities that UKIP deem normatively essential to democratic and efficacious representation. The elite do not have them. UKIP do.

We have already seen how the EFF similarly complain about the elite's practices of image management through media events to the detriment of democratic principles: "Parliament which is supposed to fight corruption by holding the executive accountable has been turned into a fashion parade" (EFF_tweet19). At the opening of the SONA, politicians and their guests arrive on the red carpet dressed for the occasion in designer clothes, but the EFF stomp into parliament in their usual uniform of red overalls and miners' helmets (Figure 4.4). While in the above-quoted tweet the EFF construct a binary between fighting corruption and wearing fashionable dresses, the EFF's own attention-grabbing dress sense is a performance that is consistent with their underlying ideology: unlike the elite's expensive costumes, it serves not to distract attention from pertinent political issues but to *draw* attention to such issues. It is the uniform of the silent majority, which is being suppressed in the political process and is now given voice through the EFF. As the EFF's trademark means of symbolic production, it is a clear and simple performative manifestation of populist ideology.

Both parties' reliance on simple symbolic forms of embodiment has two implications. First, it conflates the opinions of the electorate with the persons having them through the embodiment of identity. Diverse opinions are thus conflated into a homogenous general will, and the populist representative in turn arrives at this through innate identification and authenticity rather than research and expertise. This is a particular interpretation of Ankersmit's resemblance theory, which sees any form of intermediation as "impermissible distortion" (2002, p. 113). The two parties' simple, visually distinct means of symbolic production are clearly projected as symbolic acts that enable them to retain a sense of closeness to the people. Their frequent breaches of the norms of political speech, appearance and behaviour all at once signal identification with the people and create quotes for headlines and visuals for front

pages. Dress, gesture, slang and memes: such forms and modes of physical and virtual embodiment function as a means of performing populist ideology by claiming to be one of the people; as a tool of creating visibility by standing out from the formality of elite norms; as an expression of intimacy in the performance of authentic representation; as a means of lending a voice to the silent majority. If populist ideology rests on the central tenet of a Manichaean relationship between the people and the elite, it is performed by means of populists inserting themselves in the middle of the equation by embodying the people. In a bid to establish a closer and more direct relationship between the people and power, populists represent themselves as intermediaries, and as the only acceptable intermediaries.

8.3.4 REPRESENTING THE PEOPLE THROUGH EXTRAORDINARINESS

If populists are just like ordinary people, what legitimises their privileged position as representatives? They justify this position by their self-representation as truth tellers. As political intermediaries, they are oracles, clairvoyant portals to the truth whose mediation causes no friction or distortion. In this one respect they represent themselves as different from the people. Yet at the same time, their self-representation as extraordinary, in contrast to the ordinary people, also constitutes the people in negative terms. If populists are truth tellers, the people are deceived, repressed by elite representatives and unable to discern objective reality. They are, in Farage's words, "the people who have been oppressed" (UKIP_live1). As truth tellers the two populist parties are not only ordinary; they are *extra*ordinary. *They* can achieve the will of the people for they alone see the truth. UKIP celebrate Farage's part as oracle in a press release titled, "Nigel Farage exposes EU hypocrisy and faux outrage" (UKIP_press10). The term 'exposes' in this headline implies the role that populists see themselves as playing: that of exposing the truth behind the political lies of the elite. As we saw in chapter six, they claim to occupy a special epistemological position that enables them to achieve this act of revelation and impart the truth to the people. In their claim, disruption is a proof of UKIP's extraordinariness and ability to fulfil the people's wishes: "UKIP has not gone to Brussels and Strasbourg to be placid and inert. We made a promise to you to fight for what you believe in. And that is what we are going to do" (UKIP_col1). Moreover, as the people's representatives, the 'truth'

that UKIP speaks to power equates to 'what you believe in': their mode of representation performs their populist mass ideology.

In making this promise through direct modes of communication, they address their constituents directly to underscore their sincerity and the centrality of their relationship with the people to their actions in the EP. And they proudly showcase their norm breaking behaviour, as we saw in the opening to this chapter: "with 24 Union Jacks fluttering on a spread of desks in one corner of the chamber, it was clear who would be the disruptive characters among the amassed", Farage boasts (UKIP_col1). You can almost hear his naughty chuckle. While UKIP happily own the signifier of disruption, the acts it signifies are in reality rather tame. Farage insists that UKIP MEPs are in Brussels to shake things up a bit, yet he is describing action that – at least compared to the EFF's – is in fact rather restrained and subdued: silently standing with backs turned to a chamber orchestra (see Figure 4.8), and a so-called March to Freedom that involves five UKIP MEPs with resolute expressions on their faces walking across the EP square while having their photograph taken.

In the EFF's claim, the elite's lack of representativeness also legitimises disruptive action, but unlike UKIP, the EFF are careful to deny the signifier of disruption: "The Economic Freedom Fighters did not disrupt", they maintain in a tweet (EFF_tweet28). Yet they engage in behaviour that enacts violence upon parliamentary norms and procedures, if not rules. Rather, in their norm breaking the EFF insist on explicitly complying with and upholding the constitution to legitimise their performance and define it as non-disruptive. Speaking of themselves, they complain, "those that say, we must adhere to the constitution, we must adhere to the oath of office are called names and are called disrupters by those who have become compatible with criminals" (EFF_conf3). In the South African context, disruption endangers the fragile institutions that are so strong background symbols in the transitional democratic context; it is an unjustifiable threat to democratic stability. The EFF therefore wrap their 'bad manners' in a cloak of legal compliance and insist, "that which we are doing is within the confines of the rules of parliament" (EFF_conf3). Consistently with this denial of disruption, they are then able to champion representative democracy as a means to empower the people. UKIP's and the EFF's mismatches of signifier and

signified are thus inverse. UKIP big up a subdued performance through signification while the EFF play down their destabilising behaviour. In their contrasting contexts of rigid institutional bureaucracy and fragile transition, the two parties achieve each their own balance of claims and embodied performances in bids for democratic representation.

Moreover, the EFF's denial of disruption is somehow at odds with their repeated calls for "[r]adical and militant" (for example, EFF_press4) action to democratise parliament, for they still self-represent as extraordinary. They tread a fine line between legality and potent action, a balancing act that is necessary given their exposure of the political and media elites as purveyors of false consciousness and as transgressors of parliamentary rules. To balance these disparate elements they therefore claim to "push the constitution to the limit" (EFF_tweet43). As we saw in chapter six, the EFF claim to be ready to make martyrial self-sacrifices to that effect: "There is only 25 of us and we fight in a manner that will make you think there is 200 of us" (EFF_tweet29). Such claims in turn lend a moral bent to their role as representatives, just like UKIP's.

Populists' self-representation takes two chief forms, then: first, as ordinary and identifying with the people through embodiment and, second, as truth tellers and signifying extraordinariness. The former constitutes a particular version of the resemblance theory. The latter is where populists depart from the resemblance theory. Unlike the people who cannot on their own see through the elite's fog of lies, they self-represent as imbued with agency to create change on the basis of their privileged epistemological position. By demonstrating their own agency in combination with morality and identification with the people, they perform a representative act of empowerment. Both UKIP and the EFF perform this forcefulness – for this is a claim to perlocutionary force – in their self-representations through disruption. While we have seen that the two parties signify their disruptive behaviour differently, they are both keen to project potency (this, no doubt, is also part of the reason behind Malema repeatedly drawing attention to his balls!). In other respects, however, their disruptive behaviour differs as much as their signification of it as it is confined by different forms of social power. This social power is in turn the very subject of the two parties' disruptive performances. Both UKIP and the EFF see it as their role to lift the veil of

false consciousness that, through ritual, norms and false elite rhetoric, is preventing the people from seeing the truth. In their unique position outside the sphere of politics – which, as we have seen, is infiltrated by a fog of lies, deception and misrepresentations of reality – only populists are able to see the truth and enlighten the people.

8.4 DISCUSSION

In this chapter I explored two aspects of UKIP and the EFF's performances of representation in order to query **how disruptive performance communicatively manifests a populist mode of representation**. I enquired into the two parties' conceptions of performance and its role in representative democracy, and I interrogated the ways in which these conceptions are performed through disruptive action and shape the parties' mode of representation. The two parties' concerns about the state of representative democracy are strikingly similar in both the established democratic context of the EP and the transitional democracy of South Africa. A widening gulf between elites and people result in both UKIP and the EFF diagnosing representative democracy in their respective contexts with a severe lack of responsiveness. The populist response to this situation is to lay bare the widening gulf between representatives and represented by bringing into view a false consciousness imposed by the elite through hollow performances and abuses of social power. In this claim the people are left powerless, in the grip of oligarchs.

The stated populist cause is to remove the veil of deceit from the eyes of the people and expose the objective reality that elite performance is supposedly obscuring. This claim equates the inauthenticity of the elite with untruth and populists' own authentic performance with truth-telling. Contrary to Goffman's claim that impression management is inherent in everyday life and necessary to negotiate social interaction, populists portray impression management as an immoral quality in political representatives, especially when the media enters the picture. Impression management aimed at ensuring visibility of only the desired front to a ubiquitous media is deceitful and insincere since it results in a discrepancy between the elite's real values, feelings and beliefs on the one hand and their public performance on the

other. Such performance is inauthentic and hence immoral. Any sense of efficacy that the public feels is therefore based on false premises.

The two parties' own claims to empower the people are based on disintermediation, which takes two forms: identification through embodiment and truth-telling through disruption. Their identification with the people builds on closeness in terms of values, experience and sensibilities. Embodiment can in this way be seen as a means of disintermediation: it makes the path between the people and power appear as short as possible. In its breach of the norms of formal political speech, dress and behaviour, it is also a form of disruptive performance. The populist parties' special capabilities as truth tellers legitimate their roles as representatives but also assume the need of the people to be freed from the elite's veil of false consciousness. In the populist claim, the act of disruption is undertaken in order to enable the misguided people to see through the lies of the elite, to finally become cognisant of the 'reality' that hides behind the masquerade of 'politics'. In this sense, truth-telling is also a form of disintermediation that makes the people's access to power more direct.

Given this ambiguous self-representation as at once ordinary and extraordinary that the two populist parties achieve through disruption, how can we conceive of the ways in which the populist mode of representation constitutes the people? Let us recall Ankersmit's notion of a "politically naïve" electorate. Such an electorate understands any discrepancy between the elite and themselves as misrepresentation. We have seen that the populist representative claim is based on just such a portrayal of the gap between the elite and the people. Populists justify their own positions as representatives by attacking the elite for their misrepresentations and representing themselves as being able to see through them and close the gap. Such a claim both speaks to and constitutes the type of electorate that Ankersmit describes. This interpretation would suggest that populists are taking advantage of politically vulnerable subjects, are encouraging a simplistic attitude to politics and are actively creating an electorate that can be easily duped. However, this suggests a rather one-sided and condemnatory conclusion. Let us therefore first consider the similarities and differences between the two cases and the ways in which their claims draw on their respective contexts, for the populist representative claims are not entirely fabricated.

This exercise moreover demonstrates how the comparison across different democratic contexts adds to our understanding of populist communication.

I draw out two main differences between the cases. First, the two parties' exposure of social power as an illegitimate means of control by elites is based on different identity-related problematics. These in turn result from the two countries' respective paths to democracy and associated dominant modes of representation. The EFF's claim builds on the background symbol of Apartheid and a notion of the people as black, indigenous and rightfully sovereign. Yet the ANC government's physical resemblance to the people since the end of Apartheid complicates the EFF's ideological portrayal of the elite as non-identical to the people. The EFF therefore focus on the new black elite's behaviour, rather than their appearance and background, as comparable to that of the former white oppressors. They may be of the people, but they behave like the enemy: they are traitors who have failed to deliver on their promises and have morally betrayed their own ethnos. The people are therefore "within their right to demand a Government which will be closer to them" (EFF_press3). As we have seen, the EFF base their own representative claim on closeness, which they partly achieve by dressing as domestic workers and identifying with the people through language. The nature of the South African elite and its associated mode of representation contrasts with UKIP's portrayal of the EP elite as living in a bubble and not having any shared life experience with the people. The lack of resemblance is structural in this case and has been institutionalised in the EP. The populist solution to the elite's inauthenticity is therefore also different in the two cases: replacement of a corrupt, self-seeking elite in the EFF's case, and a removal of intermediating institutional structures in UKIP's case.

Second, the ways in which the two parties attempt to engender empowerment through their self-representations are highly context dependent. The institution of the EP confines and restricts disruptive performance more than the less established structures of the South African parliament, whose attempts to gain control through authoritarian means turn counterproductive as the EFF use their social power against them. The populist claims are then diametrically opposed to these conditions. In the context of the European Parliament, UKIP's solution to their diagnosis of a lack of responsiveness is to do away with what they consider to be constricting,

intermediating institutions like the EU. Yet the very quality of bureaucratic and regulatory constraint of which they complain inhibits their performance of this claim. In the fragile and therefore malleable context of the transitional regime of South Africa, the EFF's suggested road to responsive representation is to strengthen the institutions of political representation. In their case, however, their performance of this claim threatens the self-same institutions by disrupting the vulnerable norms and procedures that keep it upright and ensure its tenuous stability.

The EP's grip on social power demonstrates that it prioritises stability and the substitution theory's filtering mechanisms above the enabling of unheard voices and identification. There is a general sense among the public of a moral void in representative politics, which is designed for winning votes, not for realising ideals. In the case of South Africa, the government's use of social power transgresses the boundary of what is democratically permissible. The effects are similar to those in the EP: a lack of responsiveness and identification between representatives and citizens, and morality being lost as a guiding line in democratic politics. This in turn suggests that UKIP's and the EFF's claims are not without foundation and that their disruptive actions are the only feasible means of communicating them. While they introduce an undesirable essentialism and reductionism to the representative relationship, they also provide the means of opening up debate on existing fault lines in representative democracy that would otherwise remain obscured by entrenched practices of social power. The performances of the two parties have in this respect emerged as means of communicating complex arguments in restrictive and antagonistic environments. They are not communicating style over substance. Rather, they use innovative and flexible forms of communication and have through these initiated a symbolic dialogue with elites, citizens and media in circumstances where it is near-impossible to engage them.

This populist claim is of course itself a performance, and it is performative, and so the conclusion must be a balanced one. As the claim avows to reveal the mechanisms through which the elite construct a false reality, it itself constitutes an alternative political reality. The essentialist moral cleavage, with the elite on one side and populists and the people on the other, forms the basis of this ideology. In both UKIP's and the EFF's cases, the very act of representing the elite as self-serving and

unconcerned with the interests of the people engenders and enhances feelings of inefficacy in relation to the current system: it makes people feel their voices go unheard in the political process. In this sense, the inefficacy that characterises modern representative democracy is to a large extent a populist construction, even if it requires a firm foundation in recognisable reality to become a successfully performed claim.

9. THE HYBRID MEDIATION OF THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM: CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The terms of mediation in established as well as transitional democracies are changing. These changes place new demands, opportunities and risks on the performance of the political persona (Corner, 2003). The increased visibility that new media engender has become a "double-edged sword" that leaves representatives vulnerable to the constant dangers of scandal, gaffes, leaks and exposed outbursts (Thompson, 2005, p. 41ff); someone is always ready with a camera phone when you are eating a bacon sandwich. At the same time, we witness new types of actors who are able to make use of new technologies and speak to the changing media demands. They can now access power by garnering visibility – through the spectacular, the unexpected or the easily shareable – and by bestowing it upon traditional power holders when they least want it. Political representatives' difficulties in negotiating the demands on the visibility of their mediated political personas render their armour of authenticity dangerously fragile (Thompson, 2005). And when it is pierced and deflates, public feelings of inefficacy are nourished.

In the course of my analysis in the preceding chapter three criteria for the evaluation of elite performance emerged from the two populist parties' claims: first, visibility management as an immoral undertaking that pushes aside principled democratic practice; second, authenticity as an essential quality in representatives; and third, efficacy as based on the false premises of inauthentic elite performances in the representative democracies of both the UK and South Africa. These criteria of visibility, authenticity and efficacy are in fact the very demands that the new media environment places upon mediated representatives (Coleman, 2011). Moreover, whilst criticising the elite for their preoccupation with pampering to the media, we have seen that populists' own performances of these very claims meet the same criteria. In their attacks on the elite's impression management practices they channel and control visibility, perform their own authenticity, and engender efficacy through performances of disintermediation in the form of identification coupled with truth-telling.

In this chapter I pick up on these findings and relate them more explicitly to a media perspective. To do so, I consider from a theoretical perspective the symbiosis between populism and the new media environment suggested elsewhere in the literature (see, amongst others, Bos and Brants, 2014; Esser et al., 2016; Krämer, 2017; Mazzoleni et al., 2003; Moffitt, 2016; Stanyer, 2007, chap. 5) by developing a conceptual approach to address the question, **how does populist communication harmonise with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment?** I build on the argument that populist ideology and performance have a certain affinity with the affordances and imaginaries of social media in particular (see also, for example, Bartlett, 2014; Engesser et al., 2016; Gerbaudo, 2014; Groshek and Engelbert, 2013). This enables them to use social media to occupy the ambiguous position of deriding the role of the media in politics whilst catering to their needs and wants. Before I reach this point, I first consider the notion of mediation in the new media environment and relate this to my perspective on political performance. In the course of this discussion I develop the notion of hybrid mediated performance to denote how populists aim their performances at and develop them within hybrid modes of mediation. I then turn to the above argument about how the populist performance of representation relates in turn to each of the three demands of visibility, authenticity and efficacy that the new media environment places upon political representatives.

9.2   MEDIATION IN THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

To develop my argument on populists' ambiguous use of the hybrid media environment, I first outline the social constructivist approach to the concept of mediation. In this approach I place less emphasis on the institutional dimension of mediation that is the focus of the extant literature on populism. Instead I conceive of mediation as a more fluid, multi-directional and less controllable process. Such a perspective will prove useful to address the complex communicative acts that populist actors undertake to relate to each other, to mainstream media and directly to the public in the hybrid media system. Second, I explore how such an approach to mediation integrates conceptually with the performance perspective on political communication that I developed throughout the previous chapters.

9.2.1 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO MEDIATION

The symbiosis between populist communication and traditional media has mainly been approached from an institutionalist perspective on mediation (see, for example, Esser et al., 2016). This tradition of mediation research approaches media as independent social institutions with their own sets of norms and rules. Studies have focused on the affinity between a populist communication style and 'media logic' – the norms and routines that govern the media's operations (Altheide and Snow, 1979) – and have, for instance, identified specific news values such as conflict framing, strategic framing and personalisation that populism speaks to (Esser et al., 2016; Mazzoleni et al., 2003). The affinity is argued to be both stylistic and ideological. A populist communication style harmonises with the journalistic news values especially associated with tabloid formats (Esser et al., 2016, p. 7; Mazzoleni, 2003; Sorensen, 2017, p. 142). The ideological objectives of political populism meanwhile coincide with those of genres such as talk show journalism, for instance demonstrating anti-establishment positions and closeness to the people (Bos and Brants, 2014; Cranmer, 2011; Krämer, 2014). The institutionalist perspective on mediation has therefore highlighted the importance of format and genre of media in their affinity with populism.

Yet the institutionalist perspective is challenging to integrate theoretically with the new and rapidly growing body of research on the affinity between populism and social media. The institutional norms and news values of professional gatekeepers as explanatory factors of populism's symbiosis with the media do not apply here. In some studies this difficulty leads to a description of populist political communication on social media as "unmediated" (Engesser et al., 2016; Groshek and Engelbert, 2013; van Kessel and Castelein, 2016). At the same time, these studies do point to the importance of the material properties of social media technologies, such as technical affordances and associated practices of use (Lievrouw, 2014) in shaping – and indeed mediating – the populist message. Where the literature traditionally has focused on the role of agency as well as technology in constructing reality, technology takes centre stage in studies of social media where processes of (co-)construction differ from those of traditional media. In an attempt to align themselves with the institutionalist theoretical perspective, communication scholars have then identified a "network media logic" (Klinger and Svensson, 2015) to explain this form of mediation that takes

place on social media. Studies on populism and social media have used this approach to usefully explain how affordances and practices both enable and augment populist political communication. They have, for instance, identified the features of: 'direct' interpersonal engagement, non-elite access to production and circulation, the use of personal action frames and personification, polarisation, personalisation through the image of the leader, the short format of microblogs and competition for attention, and sharing among likeminded peers (Bobba, 2018; Bracciale and Martella, 2017; Engesser et al., 2017, 2016; Groshek and Engelbert, 2013; Pajnik and Sauer, 2018; Stier et al., 2017; van Kessel and Castelein, 2016).

Two unresolved theoretical issues remain in the wake of this new and rapidly growing body of research on populism and social media. First, studies tend to empirically investigate social media and its associated 'logic' in isolation from the rest of the hybrid media system (Chadwick, 2013). This results in one-medium bias, a lack of recognition of the complexity of the media ecosystem (Bode and Vraga, 2018; Meyer, 2002) and its hybrid nature where a single medium is rarely used in isolation, and a lack of theoretical coherence across studies of traditional and new media. Second, empirical studies repeatedly identify imaginary and mythical properties of social media – such as its techno-utopian myths of the emancipatory and non-hierarchical nature of the internet as a site for democracy to flourish (Gerbaudo, 2014, pp. 16–17) – as central to the ways in which populists construct meaning on social media platforms (Engesser et al., 2016; Gerbaudo, 2014; Groshek and Engelbert, 2013). However, the notion of 'media logics' builds on a materialist perspective that is unable to fully account for such collective processes of symbolic meaning-making. How may we better reconcile the empirical study of the hybrid media system and its multi-faceted influences on populist meaning-making with a conceptualisation of mediation? These three interconnected sites of meaning-making – institutional agency, the materiality of technology, and the collective process of myth-making – have yet to be explored in an integrated manner in relation to populist political communication. I suggest that the conceptual framework I outlined in chapter two, with its integration of form and content, can also fruitfully be applied to an approach to mediation that overcomes the dichotomies of materiality versus content, and affordances versus imaginaries. The disparate empirical studies mentioned above in conjunction suggest that such an

integrated perspective would provide a fertile avenue for investigating the mediation of populism.

Within the broader social constructivist tradition, the concept of mediation describes "how communication has to be grasped as a process of mediating meaning construction" (Hepp and Krotz, 2014, p. 3). It is concerned with media's role in the communicative construction of socio-cultural reality. The term mediation then refers to a more substantive operation than the act of transmitting something through the media. Mediation is a problematic process concerned with the media's power to shape representations of 'reality' (Livingstone, 2009, p. 5; Strömbäck, 2008, p. 230), a process characterised by the media's substantive intervention to the extent that it affects and changes the object of mediation. This includes how political reality is depicted, constructed and understood.

This perspective allows us to understand mediation as a more complex process than the linear transmission suggested by approaches that limit themselves to an institutional focus (Couldry, 2008). In the hybrid media system, content is shared, circulated and interacted with across media types, formats and platforms in ways that go beyond interaction between the originators and their intended audiences. The flows and consequences of mediation are non-linear and multi-directional, to the extent that they involve a "process of environmental transformation" (ibid., p. 8). To paraphrase Livingstone's (2009) famous expression, everything is mediated. The mediated and the media mutually shape each other's conditions of production, understanding and use (Lievrouw, 2014) through interaction between a variety of actors, institutions and the environments that support them (Silverstone, 2005, p. 189). With this complexity in mind, I follow Couldry in his definition of mediation as,

> capturing a variety of dynamics within media flows… flows of production, flows of circulation, flows of interpretation or reception, and flows of recirculation as interpretations flow back into production or flow outwards into general social and cultural life (2008, p. 8).

The complex asymmetry and web of interconnections that this approach engages with is different in emphasis but nonetheless complementary to, and to some extent

overlapping with, the institutional focus that is dominant in the populism literature. It enables the examination of not only the difficulties political actors face in their attempts to manage their mediated self-representations by adapting to media logic. It also enables consideration of how certain actors have the potential to influence other actors and their mediated personas in struggles over meaning (which, as we have seen, is a central element in populism's Manichaean relationship to the elite) within the process of mediation; how mediated representations travel and change within the media ecology; how different media platforms complement each other in hybrid forms of mediation; and the wider socio-political implications that result from the interplay between populist communication and the media in the hybrid media system. This perspective of the social constructivist tradition of mediation research has been less explored in relation to populist political communication. Yet it has the potential to provide a theoretical bridge between the dynamics of traditional and new media. It also offers the ability to capture the symbiosis of symbolic and material means of meaning construction that empirical studies have noted to be central to the mediation of populist communication. I also suggest that this perspective relates directly to the antagonistic relationship between the elite and the people and populists themselves in populist ideology and the way in which it is communicated through mediated disruptive performance.

9.2.2 MEDIATION AND POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

The above approach to mediation and its focus on non-linear and multi-directional meaning construction through form as well as content is consonant with a performance perspective on political communication. Before I move on to the specifics of populists' use of social media, I integrate the social constructivist approach to mediation with Alexander's (2006) perspective on performance as cultural practice that I outlined in chapter seven. I first discuss how an integrated perspective on mediated political representation recognises that political meaning and sense-making invokes cultural narratives, shared myths and symbols that originate within as well as outside of media. For instance, populists' use of the "technologies of self" (Van Dijck, 2013b, p. 201), as Van Dijck terms social media, can be a symbolic statement in and of itself that associates populists with the practices of ordinary people. Further, the mediation of political performance also constructs the cultural milieu. In other words,

processes of mediation operate in a mutually constitutive relationship with their context in similar ways to the processes of representation that I considered in chapter two. I go on to explore how performance relates to the material properties of media that shape and are shaped by such complex and multi-directional processes of meaning-formation. This in turn gives rise to a discussion of the performativity of media.

In the context of populism, the relationship between mediation and performance is only just starting to be explored in the literature. Moffitt's (2016) innovative approach adopts the concept of mediatisation for this purpose and explores how populist communication increasingly incorporates and adjusts to media logic over time. His perspective is highly relevant to explain the relationship between populism and the media and the recent rise in populism in mediatised democracies. In developing his approach, I adopt the broader and more flexible perspective on mediation outlined above. In doing so, I consider the creation of political meaning beyond the interaction between media institutions and political actors. Instead, I focus on the interaction between form, content and context in the formation of meaning within processes of mediation. This enables me to query how multi-directional processes of mediation affect the representation of (populist) reality. As Couldry (2008, p. 3) argues, building on Silverstone,

> We should not expect a single unitary answer to the question of how media transform the social, since media themselves are always at least doubly articulated, as both transmission technology and representational content (Silverstone, 1994) in contexts of lived practice and situated struggle that themselves are open to multiple interpretations or indeed to being ignored.

I extend the focus on institutionalist media logic to consider the double articulation of media as material objects and as symbolic messages (Livingstone, 2007; Silverstone, 1994) in keeping with my integrated communication approach developed in chapter two. Building on this perspective, the notion of co-production suggests that media technologies exist in a mutually constitutive relationship between the material and the social. It refers to "the simultaneous creation of knowledge and artifacts/practices

which actually constitutes social life" (Lievrouw, 2014, p. 30). Co-production can then also be found in the process of making representations that convert concepts into material form (ibid.), a process that I suggest is analogous to performance as a manifestation of ideology.

Based on this perspective on technology, I conceive of digitally mediated performances, such as social media posts, as embodied in technologies and practices (see also Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013; Chouliaraki, 2010; Enli, 2016). The material as well as symbolic properties of media form part of a mediated performance of representation. Moreover, these properties can be likened to the elements of cultural performance that I outlined in chapter seven. The material properties of media correspond to social power as the external boundary of a performance (Alexander, 2006, p. 36), and the symbolic properties of media correspond to background symbolic resources. In a mediated performance they become part of the performer's toolbox as symbolic resources for articulation. In this sense, I see media as fulfilling a variety of functions in social performance. They are means of symbolic production that are controlled by social power, for instance as authorities limit access to media. But media themselves also set boundaries for a performance in the form of social power, such as affordances that determine their use, and background symbols inherent in media themselves. Moreover, they are performative. As suggested by the notion of co-production, they contribute to constituting the social world. They shape practices, construct, transform and recontextualise meaning.

The process of mediation affects how reality is represented to citizens and is crucial to understand the media's power in the naturalisation of ideology (Couldry, 2000; Silverstone, 2005). Yet media do not simply construct reality in a vacuum. Silverstone opens his chapter on Mediation (1999, p. 13) by arguing that we need to:

…think of mediation as extending beyond the point of contact between media texts and their readers or viewers. It requires us to consider it as involving producers and consumers of media in a more or less continuous activity of engagement and disengagement with meanings which have their source or their focus in those mediated texts, but which extend through, and are measured against, experience in a multitude of different ways.

This view of studying the media incorporates aspects of both production and consumption as central to the process of mediation. It further acknowledges that such a process goes beyond the text. In doing so, the process of mediation is also in this respect conceptually aligned with the manifestation of ideology through performance: both processes operate in a mutually constitutive relationship with cultural practices, myths and social reality, with performers and audiences. Just as ideology is performed and interpreted with the actor and recipient's understanding of "not only the situation but also the appropriateness of what can and must be said and not said in that situation" (Isin and Ruppert, 2015, p. 55), so is a mediated performance influenced by its context of reception.

As we have seen, the performance of ideology relies on existing background symbols fluctuating in collective cultural memory that political communicators can employ as resources in their representations of reality. The construction of meaning that takes place within processes of mediation mirror this relationship with the social. Some of the background symbols employed in mediated performances are then associated specifically with media – such as the belief that technologies are deterministic, all-powerful, along the lines of McLuhan's determinism (Silverstone, 1999, p. 21) – and can achieve mythical properties whose power over our imagination is vast. We can thus start to see technology as culture (Carey, 1989). These myths are not mere falsehoods to be evaluated according to criteria of true or false but rather constitute reality (Flichy, 2007; Mosco, 2005). As in a performance perspective, they can be deemed felicitous or infelicitous. They can be employed by political actors; and they become part of the material manifestation and shaping of ideological meaning that I outlined in my communication perspective in chapter two.

Not only the mythical and symbolic but also the material properties of media are relevant to the intersection between mediation and performance. Traditionally there has been a distinction in the literature between interpersonal (dialogical) and mass (dissemination) communication. With the advent of the internet, and social media in particular, processes of mediation combine both forms of communication. In this respect social media offer a different form of mediation from traditional media as it can take two forms. First, mediation can take the form of remediation (Bolter and Grusin, 2000) of another virtual or a real-life performance (such as a radio interview, a rally), where the material and mythical properties of digital media become relevant aspects of the remediated performance through a process of mediation. Second, the act of mediation can constitute an 'original' performance in and of itself that would not exist outside of social media (Somdahl-Sands and Finn, 2015). In the latter case, social media have the potential to mediate a performance where the 'original' would not be a face-to-face speech or even acting on a set, which is then transmitted by the television screen. Rather, it is a performance within and of a medium, designed for that purpose and unable to exist outside of that medium. As embodied "extensions of man" (McLuhan, [1964]1994), media technologies cannot be reduced to sites of performance or tools of transmitting a performance but form part of the embodied performance itself.

From this perspective, media are constitutive elements in the mutual shaping process that occurs between ideology and performance. As such, they are also constitutive of the claim-making process; and their use can be a symbolic act that is a claim in and of itself (Isin and Ruppert, 2015). For example, UKIP's frequently used hashtag "#PeoplesArmy" integrates the imaginary and material properties of Twitter in a digitally mediated performance: it constructs a community through the digital act of using a hashtag as an interactive device, it relies on the cultural context of symbols of community and bottom-up action on social media, and on a discursive level it denotes that community as the totality of 'the people', imbuing them with radical intent and the power of the masses. In more overt intersections between virtual and physical social realities, a synthesis of these two forms of digitally mediated performance can in addition form part of a 'hybrid mediated performance'. In such cases a digital performance such as a tweet remediates a live (or other mediated) performance whilst

serving an interpretive and contextualising function that supports, comments on and interacts with the original performance. The two performances – the original and the digital – together constitute a hybrid mediated performance.

The hybridity that characterises the modern media environment has implications for the embodiment through, and materiality of, live and digital performance. The approach to mediation that I have outlined above suggests a spatial transformation and asymmetry as a consequence of changes in the media environment (Couldry, 2008, pp. 11–12) as social spaces change when new technologies become embedded in them. This transformation of social space affects "the social production of value and authority" (ibid., p. 12). I conceive of this asymmetry as both materially and symbolically generated. This enables the approach to capture the hybrid media system and the ways in which political actors use social media to complement, influence and circumvent traditional channels of communication. As entrepreneurial actors, populists generate and authenticate visible spaces for the authoritative voicing of their ideology through new digital channels. This perspective equally encourages the analysis of how populist disruptive performance symbolically transforms institutional spaces into effective sites for the mediation of their oppositional self-representations. Further, when integrating these two modes of performance – disruption and the use of social media – a flexible perspective on mediation that looks beyond the relationship between politicians and media institutions also encourages consideration of how populists use such hybrid modes of mediation to challenge existing power holders and represent constituents. By confronting institutionally embedded norms and procedures, populist hybrid mediated performances create new spaces and channels for the flows of production, circulation, interpretation and recirculation of political symbols and meanings; and in doing so, they set the conditions for the elite's image management practices and their mediation.

9.3 THE REQUIREMENTS OF MEDIATED REPRESENTATION

Having outlined my perspective on mediated performance, I now move on to consider how populists perform representation in the new media environment through hybrid forms of mediation. Coleman (2011) identifies three primary criteria of mediated representation that are useful in considering this question: visibility, authenticity and

efficacy. The analysis in the preceding chapter confirmed the centrality of these criteria in populist claims as well as performances. We saw how the populist representative claim denounces the elite's quest for visibility and thereby render elite performances inauthentic by revealing that they ultimately engender efficacy on false pretences. Yet populists' performance of this claim itself seeks to meet the three criteria. Visibility and authenticity are most obviously related to the *performance* of representation. For instance, we saw in the preceding chapter that populists create spectacle, manage theirs and the elite's visibility and perform authenticity through disruption. Efficacy, as a feeling that resides in the audience, sits on the borderline between performance and its outcome. With my object of analysis being the performance projected by the populist actor, I am less concerned with the feelings of the audience (which I do not study empirically) than with the relationship between the performing representative and the constituency-audience that the populist performance projects. We saw in the previous chapter that populists sought to enhance efficacy through performances of disintermediation that make the relationship between populists and the people appear more direct. I therefore focus on how they might achieve this in relation to processes of mediation.

We saw in the preceding chapter that the two populist parties' performances of visibility, authenticity and disintermediation were similar. Indeed, a strong argument in the literature on democratisation and the media suggests that the conditions they respond to share many similarities across established and transitional democracies (Voltmer, 2015). South Africa's hybrid media system, which, like hybrid political systems, mixes authoritarian and democratic practices (Voltmer, 2011), may place more stringent conditions on oppositional actors like the EFF. Yet, in its own way, the system's relationship to politics is dominated by the same demands of visibility, authenticity and efficacy as established media systems. I now explore each of these criteria in turn – efficacy, visibility and authenticity– and their intersection with the performance of populist ideology. As the primary aim of the mediated performances of representation, I start out with efficacy.

9.3.1 EFFICACY

The struggles of public representatives to deal with the changing conditions of mediation through impression management have fed disenchantment with politics in the public to the extent that 'politics' has become a dirty word. As Hay argues, "to attribute 'political' motives is now invariably to question that actor's honesty, integrity or capacity to deliver an outcome that reflects anything other than his or her material self-interest" (2013, p. 1). The awareness of the deceit inherent in mediated representation and public communication therefore affects how people feel about politics and whether they feel properly represented (Bennett and Entman, 2001; Cappella and Jamieson, 1997). Efficacy is a subjective experience that resides in the represented. Internal efficacy, which will be my main focus here, refers to citizens' perceptions of their personal political competence and influence. External efficacy relates to the perceived responsiveness of representatives. Both internal and external efficacy are based on a communicative relationship between representatives and the public (Coleman, 2011, p. 45). Heightening feelings of efficacy would then rely on making such a relationship appear more meaningful, and possibly more direct, less mediated (or, at least, less problematically mediated).

Internal efficacy has recently been connected to the access to information afforded by new media technologies (Coleman et al., 2008; Halpern et al., 2017). However, a detrimental aspect of the easy access to information via internet-based mediation is the lack of interpretive clarity that was traditionally provided by television (Gurevitch et al., 2009, p. 174). We inhabit a climate of overwhelmingly abundant sources of information. Yet these offer limited civically useful political content. The result is uncertainty about which sources to trust about untrustworthy politicians. These arguments in fact chime with populist ideology. As we have seen, the mass ideology of populism is founded on public perceptions of politics, so perhaps it is not surprising that it responds to public perceptions of political understanding and influence. The provision of access to adequate and truthful information – to an objective representation of reality – is what we have seen populists attempt to monopolise in the preceding chapters. Populists offer a sense of certainty and clarity that engenders feelings of efficacy. This analysis is consistent with Krämer's (forthcoming, p. 8) proposition that populists view the media as deliberately obfuscating objective reality

and therefore limiting the people's access to truth. This, as the above-mentioned studies show, in turn weakens efficacy.

Truth-telling, as we have seen, is one way in which populists seek to reinforce a sense that power runs directly from themselves as representatives to the people. They evoke a gulf between elites and people over which the representative bond cannot stretch and demonstrate the closeness of their own connection to the people. This evocation of efficacy on the basis of directness is consistent with the literature, which sees the denunciation of processes and practices of mediation – both in relation to political institutions and to communication – to be a central aspect of populism (see, for example, De la Torre, 2014; Krämer, 2014, forthcoming; Kriesi, 2014). Although we saw in chapter six that populist calls for disintermediation do not in the South African case equate to dismissing intermediating democratic institutions, these institutions are in that context perceived as attained by the people themselves through revolution and represented as an embodiment of the people's will. Just like populist representatives who embody the people, they therefore do not stand between the people and their understanding of reality and of the truth. On the contrary, (like populist representatives) they enable access to the truth. This appears to be the central tenet in populists' claim to disintermediation.

Coleman et al.'s (2008) focus group study on new media and efficacy also reports a desire amongst participants for a more direct link to their representatives. New media technologies were one part of the suggested means. However, participants also articulated a sense of estrangement from the political world, which often resided in official language, uniformly referred to as "political correctness" (ibid., p. 779). In this sense, a populist communication style, characterised by 'ordinariness' and a disruption of the norms of political speech may serve to increase internal efficacy by removing the mediating barrier of formal language, especially when such an informal style remains intact in the process of mediation through media such as social media. The implications of Coleman et al.'s (2008) findings suggest that the combination of populist embodiment, such as through the performance of ordinariness, and a claim to disintermediation in the sense of giving people direct access to the truth, is a winning formula for internal efficacy.

Meanwhile, Coleman et al.'s study suggests that external efficacy is decreased by the perception that representatives will only initiate an interactive relationship with the public for the purpose of garnering votes during election campaigns (2008, pp. 780–1). Sorensen et al. (2019) demonstrate that when the affordances of Twitter were used by the South African authorities to establish direct contact with citizens during a listening exercise, such digital acts inspired an extraordinary level of efficacy in some concerned individuals. Yet the opposite resulted from the government's more pervasive failure to make use of available affordances and from the perception that they used them for an instrumental purpose. This is the lack of efficacy that the new media environment generates, argue Gurevitch et al. (2009, p. 174):

> A disorientating sense of being technologically connected, but politically disconnected, fuels civic disengagement; citizens come to believe that politicians are bound to resist the democratic potentiality of interactive communication technologies…

Such relationships between representatives and citizens can therefore often be characterised by representatives' lack of understanding of ordinary people's everyday life and by practices of deception (Coleman et al., 2008, p. 782). The manifestation of populist ideology in acts of disruption can consequently be seen as aimed at undermining elite performances that inspire efficacy on false pretences through the exposure of such practices of deception.

9.3.2 VISIBILITY

The requirement of visibility in mediated representation refers to how far representatives can *be seen* to represent us (Coleman, 2011, p. 47). Thompson describes how communication media have engendered a new form of visibility in which the field of vision is shaped…

> …by the distinctive properties of communication media, by a range of social and technical considerations (such as camera angles, editing processes and organizational interests and priorities) and by the new types of interaction that these media make possible (2005, pp. 35–6).

Dayan (2013) even argues that changes in the media environment have fostered a new paradigm of visibility. From the perspective of public representatives, these new affordances, practices and norms have undeniably changed the art of managing visibility (Thompson, 1995, chap. 4). They provide opportunities for self-presentation, while the ubiquitous and multi-directional nature of mediation also makes visibility uncontrollable and public images inherently fragile.

The fragility of mediated representation engendered by new forms of visibility can become a weapon in the hands of populists in their attempts to undermine the public images of elite representatives. Politicians are well-known for their constant attempts at impression management – sometimes better than for their engagement in policy-making – in response to the need for visible representation. Feeding into growing public discontent with, and distrust of, practices of impression management (Norris, 2001), coupled with the assumption that disclosure of discrete activities serves a democratic purpose, visibility has the potential to become not only a "weapon of the witness" (Coleman, 2011, p. 46) as wielded by the media, but also a weapon of populists in their efforts to pitch the elite against the people.

The flows of production, circulation, interpretation and recirculation of symbolic content are more difficult to control with the advent of social media. Political actors are forced to compete in shows of spectacle and drama against celebrities and non-elite actors who grasp the opportunity afforded by new media to become visibility entrepreneurs (Dayan, 2013). In Dayan's terms, visibility has become a right where withholding visibility is equated to "a silencing process" (ibid., p. 150) by elites akin to 'old-school' authoritarian attempts to control communication media. Such displays of social power are thus not only practically near-impossible in the new media environment; they are also deemed illegitimate. The entry of new actors into processes of mediation introduces an element of contestation over political symbols and meaning in both online and physical spaces (Parry, 2015, p. 423). In conferring visibility upon the elite through disruptive acts of exposure, populists are able to provide the public with what Meyrowitz (1986, p. 47) terms a "sidestage" view. They thereby make visible the elite's acts of managing their own visibility by displaying

inconsistencies between the elite's performances and their actual values and beliefs. They expose the elite's professed authenticity as an act of deception.

When populists take on the role of visibility entrepreneurs, they claim visibility as a right: "(1) the right to be seen, (2) the right to being seen on their own terms, and (3) the right of conferring visibility on others" (Dayan, 2013, p. 139). Populists legitimise their claim to visibility by attaching the right to be seen (and heard) to the people – the silent majority – rather than themselves. By embodying the people, populists themselves then performatively engender visibility through disruption in the making of their claim. In this respect, visibility is an inherent aspect of performance, which by its very nature is oriented towards an audience with visibility in mind. Performance is thus by definition a form of visibility management. Through disruptive performance, populists confer visibility on the elite and demand visibility on their own terms. But their disruptive acts, in claiming the right to visibility, also represent reality on their own terms and challenge the media's "reality-pronouncing" function (Dayan, 2013, p. 146). These acts are therefore not only constative, they are performative. If the illocutionary force of disruption is to represent the people and their right to be seen, the perlocutionary force is visibility for populists themselves, on their own terms.

Populists' visibility appropriation takes place in both offline and online spaces. While few ordinary members of the public 'follow' political representatives on social media platforms (Larsson and Moe, 2012), new political actors can use platforms such as Twitter to garner attention for online and offline acts since tweets are often the sources of more widely consumed media coverage (ibid.; van Kessel and Castelein, 2016). Populists' immediate audience may thus be legacy media rather than their constituents. In other words, there can be a distinction between who populists speak *to* and who they speak *for* (Moffitt, 2016, pp. 105–8; Saward, 2010, pp. 48–57). Opportunities for visibility appropriation on, for instance, Twitter allow 'outsider' actors – such as populists – to not only acquire visibility but also to "define the visibility of others, to become organizers of visibility" (Dayan, 2013, p. 143). They may then impede on the terrain of journalists as the sole guardians of the holy grail of visibility.

As I argued above, the use of social media for performative purposes draws on both the material affordances of media as tools of visibility management and on their

mythical and imaginary properties (see for example Couldry, 2015a; Flichy, 2007; Mosco, 2005; Taylor, 2002) as background symbols; that is, on aspects of both form and content (see chapter two). I noted, for instance, that Couldry (2015a) points out how "the myth of 'us'" encourages the belief that social media use constitutes expressions of collectivity. This imaginary of non-hierarchical collectivity can then potentially be harnessed by populist actors, for example by constructing communities through hashtags and sharing of memes to enable new means of visibility and visibility management.

Krämer (2017, pp. 1303–4) points out that populists' use of social media can have both a strategic and a symbolic function (see also De Blasio and Sorice, 2018). We can see these two functions as corresponding to populists' use of the material affordances and imaginaries of social media respectively, and again to the pragmatics of the performative act and its semantic function. In other words, the material affordances of social media and the pragmatics of the digital act enable populists to achieve a strategic objective. For example, they can gain visibility by circumventing critical gatekeepers in mainstream media or, conversely, attracting their attention through social media. For the symbolic function, populists draw on the imaginaries of social media and other background symbols to symbolically mediate the populist representative claim. For instance, the symbolic use of social media communicates populists' denunciation of mainstream media as an elitist 'lying press' (see, for example, Holt and Haller, 2017, for a recent study on populism and the 'lügenpresse' in Germany) to whom they refuse to pander by engaging in the elite's undemocratic visibility management practices. In this ambiguous digitally mediated performance, form and content interact to create meaning in accordance with the communication perspective outlined in chapter two. In this way, populists' digitally mediated performances, like their live disruptions, can manage visibility while retaining their authenticity by keeping their claim consistent with their ideology.

9.3.3 AUTHENTICITY

I have already in some depth delved into the notion of authenticity as a moral ideal yet a performed construct in chapter seven. My discussion here will therefore be brief and focus on the relationship between authenticity and social media. Research has shown

that social media encourage a focus on identity and self–presentation (Coleman, 2005; Grow and Ward, 2013). Somdahl-Sands and Finn (2015, p. 812) even argue that, "in the twenty-first century, as mediated performance eclipses the live event, our perception of authenticity in performance also shifts". How social media can be used to generate authenticity in hybrid mediated performances is therefore a key question in the exploration of the performance of the populist mode of representation.

The literature on social media and authenticity outlines two aspects of social media relevant to this discussion. First, the affordances of social media – for instance, the ability to potentially interact with live individuals and with the machine itself – creates a kind of liveness and sense of intimate connection that inspires authenticity (ibid., p. 816). We may compare this to the spontaneity and intimacy of live performances – even where such spontaneity is staged – which we saw in the previous chapter that populists use to perform authenticity. Second, authentic self-representation on social media is characterised by a close correspondence between the online and the offline (Marwick, 2005, p. 2). The authenticity engendered through the liveness of social media may then be undermined by "revealing the disagreement between private and public self–representation" (Grow and Ward, 2013). We can see this as a requirement for consistency within hybrid mediated performances. It resonates with the analysis in the previous chapter where I found that consistency between performance and ideology and between front- and backstage behaviour are key requirements for authentic self-representation.

These criteria for authenticity in social media have two implications for populists' hybrid mediated performances. First, populists are arguably at an advantage in ensuring on- and offline consistency with their strategy of importing 'ordinary' language into formal institutional spaces. What in physical institutional contexts counts as disruptive behaviour through norm-breaking often has a natural affinity with the norms of communication on social media. As Bartlett (2014, p. 94) puts it, "The short acerbic nature of populist messages works well in this medium. Humour, outspokenness, pithy put-downs and catchy slogans: these are the DNA of cyber culture." Second, simply transferring populists' ordinarily disruptive performance to a social media context would therefore have a very different performative force as such

symbolic action may not be conceived as disruptive in a virtual environment where this kind of behaviour is the norm[32]. Social media can therefore serve as a means of legitimising and normalising offline disruptive performance whilst simultaneously engendering authenticity. In offline institutional spaces, their ordinariness and political incorrectness disrupt norms, garner media attention and symbolically communicate populist ideology. In online spaces, the same discourse corresponds to the affordances and norms of social media use. It constitutes felicitous digitally mediated performance that is consistent with offline behaviour and works in symbiosis with their institutional disruptions in hybrid forms of mediation.

9.4 DISCUSSION

In this chapter I have argued that a social constructivist approach to mediation that considers in an integrated manner institutional agency, the materiality of technology, and the symbolic resources of social imaginaries is a useful conceptual framework that can inform an integrated communication perspective on populism. Such an approach is able to account for the complex, contextual and multi-faceted influences on meaning-making as populist performances of representation journey within the hybrid media system. Being more comprehensive and flexible than approaches purely focused on media logic or affordances, it is better positioned to address the research question, how does populist communication harmonise with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment? In particular, it can be applied to the ways in which the performance of representation is achieved through hybrid mediation by responding to the demands of visibility, authenticity and efficacy in the new media environment.

I have also argued that such a perspective on processes of mediation can usefully be integrated with the conceptual framework on meaning-making that I developed in chapter two. It thereby aligns conceptually with the notion of political performance as the manifestation of ideology. Through such an approach, we can query how populists combine disruption with mediated performances that rely on emergent forms of

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[32] Disruption can of course be performed in other ways via social media by breaking the norms associated with the virtual environment and with the ways in which it is ordinarily used in politics, such as US President Donald Trump's use of Twitter.

visibility, authenticity and efficacy in the creation of hybrid mediated performances. I demonstrated in the previous chapter that acts of exposure can take the form of live disruptive performances aimed at mediation. Yet in combination with digitally mediated performances that build up and support live disruption, the hybrid nature of these mediated performances enhances their force and legitimacy. Such hybrid mediated performances simultaneously expose the elite's practices of visibility management – which in turn undermines their authenticity and their attempts at inspiring efficacy – and garner the attention of mainstream media for further mediation. Populists' ability to take advantage of the features of a media environment characterised by complex, multi-directional and often uncontrollable flows of production, circulation, interpretation and recirculation of political meaning enable them to perform such ambiguous claims through hybrid mediation.

Both performances that originate within social media and spectacular, provocative disruptions are likely to be mediated intact. Populists can thereby achieve yet another form of symbolic disintermediation to inspire feelings of efficacy. Mediation becomes a symbolic action in and of itself as populists signal disintermediation through their 'performance of mediation'. In this sense, mediation becomes part of the populist mode of representation. Moreover, the consistency between populists' disruptive transgression of norms and their social media use serves to construct their own authenticity. While they can portray this as a moral quality, they denounce institutions of mediation as espousing false consciousness and obfuscating the truth. By virtue of their own professed morality and claimed right to visibility, and to conferring visibility, they can then usurp the role of the media and provide a sidestage view of the elite's visibility management practices, exposing their performances as acts of deception and themselves offering a simplicity, certainty and clarity that engenders an efficacious relationship to the people.

10. THE HYBRID MEDIATION OF THE POPULIST REPRESENTATIVE CLAIM: EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

Cape Town, 12 February 2015

A media event is in progress: photographers, prominent authorities and celebrity guests, designer dresses, swirls, photogenic smiles. But this year's State of the Nation Address (SONA) is not only keenly mediated for its pomp and ceremony. The reason why the nation is glued to their television screens, and why the SONA becomes South Africa's first real "social media event" (du Plessis, 2015), is the promise of that most exciting form of politics: disruption, controversy, possibly (oh glee!) even violence, democracy being put to the test and disintegrating in real-time before the eyes of the nation. Both the media's and the public's expectations are fulfilled. As EFF MPs continue to disrupt President Zuma's speech, an increasingly impatient and frustrated speaker eventually breaks parliamentary rules and orders armed police to forcefully evict the EFF from the House. This, also, is part of the EFF's performance, which has carefully provoked the authoritarian reaction of their antagonists and can now adopt a position of moral and legal superiority. The government "tamper with fundamental right of media freedom" (EFF_tweet44), they tweet. Fist fights ensue, to the delight, shock and awe of the tweeting broadcast audience.

Strasbourg, 28 June 2016

Then-leader of UKIP Nigel Farage excels at increasingly gleeful and explicit breaches of the norms of political speech and behaviour as the EU referendum draws near, is won and negotiations proceed. UKIP's disruptions are confined by the stringent norms and rules of the European Parliament. Yet they have come to be expected, and Farage's repeated minor breaches of institutional norms provide continuous challenges to the establishment. Dripping with sarcasm, they succeed in provoking regular rebukes from the EP chair and reactions from the floor so indignant as to cause reprimands of their own. Referring to a video of his speech in a Facebook post, Farage boasts of his own popularity and success, "Thrilled that 4 million people have taken the time to watch my speech in the European Parliament yesterday" (UKIP_tweet11). His disruptions

establish a counter-culture that seeps into UK mainstream politics, not in its responses to the issues that UKIP raise but in its attempts to outcompete them.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

"Enemy agents" is how the EFF describe the media (EFF_press4). Populists like the EFF are famously antagonistic towards mainstream media, whom they perceive as part of the elite (Haller and Holt, 2018; Krämer, 2014). The demands on mediated representation can therefore be expected to grate with populists. Indeed it does, as we already saw in chapter eight, especially in claims against the elite's too-close relationship to the media and their resultant preoccupation with impression management rather than the interests of the people. The two populist parties accuse their respective elites of designing their performances to cater to the media's demands for visibility, authenticity and efficacy, rather than to the public's demands for authentic and responsive representation. Yet, as we shall see, populist parties practice the old adage about keeping your enemies closer. And, of course, it is necessary to anticipate processes of mediation in modern representative democracy. From the analysis in chapter eight, it emerged that when we consider the performance of the claim, rather than the claim at face value, it is curiously symbiotic with the requirements for mediated representation in the new media environment: visibility, authenticity and efficacy (Coleman, 2011). So exactly **how does populist communication harmonise so successfully with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment?**

The situation that political representation has to contend with in the new media environment in both established and transitional democracies is this: Representatives need media visibility to perform authenticity (but not too much visibility!). Representatives need authenticity to inspire efficacy. And efficacy is the very fault line in representative democracy that populists make visible; where it is felt at all, it is based on deceit. Yet if representatives are seen to engage in practices of visibility management, their authenticity is undermined. It is a tricky situation. As we have seen, the populist recipe for success is to obtain visibility performatively through the act of subverting visibility. In other words, they engage in performances whose stated aims are to expose the acts of deceit undertaken by the elite to manage their visibility; and

they design these performances as irresistible visibility magnets that are authentic by their very nature and ultimately aim to engender efficacy.

The ingredients for this recipe are: disruption, direct mediated communications (chiefly Twitter, in the two cases in question) and embodiment of the people. Stir until fully emulsified. The delectable outcome is the notion of 'hybrid mediation' – live disruptive performance and social media fused in symbiotic ways to garner the attention of mainstream media and to appeal directly to the public. To investigate the hybrid nature of the mediation of the populist representative claim, I supplement interpretive analysis of disruptive performances with quantitatively based observations of the interplay between social media and offline events. I consider three particular aspects of the ambiguous populist claim about the new media environment in order to address the above research question. First, I explore the two populist parties' portrayals of the media and its role in democratic politics. I contrast these with the parties' own modes of mediation as performances of disintermediation that aim to inspire efficacy. Second, I interrogate how the parties use hybrid modes of mediated symbolic action, integrating digitally mediated performances with their disruptive action, to achieve visibility – But wait! Most of their constituents are not even on Twitter[33]; the parties are addressing a different audience altogether: their antagonists, the media and the elite. My focus with respect to this issue will therefore be on the function of generating visibility through mainstream media. – Third, I consider how these hybrid mediated performances contribute to the parties' authentic self-representation and how they, in the case of the EFF, enable the party to not only have their authenticity mediated but to usurp the role of mediator.

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[33] Studies of the demography of UKIP supporters show them to be chiefly white males over the age of 55. They are mainly skilled working class or professionals though core supporters are working class. Few are educated beyond the age of 16 (Stanyer et al., 2016, p. 172). Surveys of British Twitter users show them to be mainly young, with very few above the age of 55 (Statista, 2017) and thus with little overlap with UKIP's supporters. An Ipsos poll shows that EFF supporters are almost uniformly black and below the age of 50, chiefly male, single and live in rural areas, have middling educational qualifications but not university degrees, and are mostly out of work (Harris, 2014). Data on the demographics of Twitter users in South Africa was not available. However, it is to be expected that Twitter users do not overlap much with the demographics of EFF supporters.

10.2 ANTI-MEDIA POPULISM: ENHANCING EFFICACY THROUGH HYBRID MEDIATION AND DISINTERMEDIATION

If efficacy is a subjective feeling of political agency that resides in the public, how do we investigate the ways in which politicians *perform* and *mediate* it? I noted in chapter nine that efficacy is based on a communicative relationship between representatives and represented. Returning to the notion of the representative claim, efficacy must then be inspired by performances that make the relationship between representatives and represented appear more direct and less troubled by friction in its mediation and intermediation. In this research I do not empirically investigate constituents' feelings of efficacy, but I briefly consider how UKIP and the EFF mediate performances in ways intended to inspire feelings of efficacy. I argue that the two populist parties achieve this through a combination of anti-media populism and hybrid mediation. First, they use modes of mediation as a form of symbolic action that signals disintermediation. This complements the performances of disintermediation that we saw in chapter eight in the form of embodying the people and self-representing as truth tellers. Second, they use hybridity to, as far as possible, retain control of their visibility within processes of mediation. Third, their mediated performances are authentic and therefore inspire feelings of efficacy. I briefly address the first of these points in this section but focus on the latter two in the following sections.

We saw in chapter eight how UKIP and the EFF focused their mode of representation on symbolic forms of disintermediation. These performances aim to make the path between the people and power appear as short as possible. Modes of mediation that avoid the gatekeepers of traditional media can perform the same function. UKIP and the EFF achieve this both through their claims *about* mediation and through the ways in which these claims are performed *through* mediation. In the claims about mediation, the two parties portray mainstream media as interfering intermediaries in a relationship between representatives and represented that ought to be more direct. Where UKIP and the EFF express concern about the elite's imposition of a false consciousness upon the people, they also see the media as obscuring reality in a similar way. UKIP state in a tweet, "our media are guilty of double standards" (UKIP_tweet12), while the EFF complain of "sustained media attacks… with the sole

aim of casting aspersions on [our] leadership and the organisation as a whole" (EFF_press4). In these claims, the media's practices of misrepresenting reality undermine the foundation for democratic representation, for the people do not have access to the truthful information they need to gain a proper understanding of and influence upon the political process.

UKIP and the EFF's performances of these claims of anti-media populism are – at least at first glance – consistent with the content of the claims. For both parties perform their claims in ways that symbolise disintermediation. That is, they use modes of mediation that avoid interfering media institutions and editorialising. Disruptive performances themselves achieve this. They are, in Blumler and Kavanagh's words, "'must-see' political spectacles and events that defy media intervention, aiming to take them directly to the people, unmediated by editors, producers, and reporters" (1999, p. 216). However, both parties also supplement disruptions aimed at mainstream media with other 'direct' modes of mediation. Farage's communications, for instance, pivot on his own LBC radio talk show, regular newspaper columns and tweets.

UKIP's tweet quoted above is an example of a mediated performance that originates within the medium and forms part of a hybrid mediated performance. It relies on the affordances of social media to circumvent gatekeepers, in keeping with the content of its message. But it also draws on the nature of this form of mediation as a resource of symbolic action. It is an act of protest made by means of a performance of mediation. By virtue of being a tweet, the act of posting it in and of itself signifies UKIP's refusal to partake in the competition over visibility in the media. The act of mediation via social media is an objection to, and circumvention of, the symbiosis between the political and media elites that characterises mainstream politics. UKIP thus make their claim to disintermediation both verbally and performatively.

Malema and the EFF likewise use direct modes of mediation. They are avid tweeters and hold regular live rallies. Like UKIP's, the EFF's tweets use the affordances of social media to circumvent the mainstream conditions of political communication, which they see as undemocratic. But they also make a point of doing so. The EFF's symbolic messages of disruption, exposure of the establishment's deceit, and their anti-media populism are supported not only by the affordances of social media but also by the

symbolic act of using those affordances. In this sense, the mediated performance of posting a tweet is also a performance of mediation that draws on the social media imaginaries of emancipation, bottom-up revolution and opposition to dominant forces associated in the public imagination with, for instance, the role of social media in the Arab Spring (see, for example, Gerbaudo, 2014; Howard and Hussain, 2013).

The parties' use of direct forms of mediation as symbolic in and of themselves enable them to address their constituents directly, signal disintermediation and convey that they are different from the self-referential, inward-looking elite who have forgotten about those they are supposed to represent. They also enable the untainted mediation of 'ordinary', informal styles that signal a direct connection to the people. Such styles avoid people feeling alienated by the formal language of politics and constitute a form of virtual embodiment. As we will see shortly in the context of their performances of authenticity via social media, Malema's frequent use of slang is, for instance, particularly well suited to the norms of social media (Bartlett, 2014). We will also see, however, that, as the two parties use hybrid mediated performances to gain visibility and perform authenticity, their performances of disintermediation circumvent the media in name only. Many of the parties' such hybrid mediated performances are in fact aimed at legacy media with the goal of further mediation. I now look at the nature of UKIP's and the EFF's use of hybrid mediation to gain visibility and perform authenticity and thereby enhance feelings of efficacy.

10.3 THE WEAPON OF VISIBILITY

Disruptive performance is a show of spectacle that is bound to get media attention. Yet in the modern media environment, performances are conducted through complex assemblages of media, and the live disruptive climax is only a small part. I now consider how the hybrid nature of UKIP and the EFF's mediation plays into the populist parties' control of visibility in entrepreneurial ways. Hybrid mediation has a particular performative function. It creates dramatic structure (Freytag, [1863]2010) by building up the performance to its climax. Aimed at an elite audience, the use of Twitter as part of hybrid mediation not only meets the media's desire for drama. As we will see later in the chapter, populist hybrid mediation also provokes responses by elites who fear for their visibility; they have consequences for politics and how it responds to the issue

of visibility. First, however, I explore the nature of UKIP's and the EFF's hybrid mediation and how it is constructed.

10.3.1   GAINING VISIBILITY THROUGH HYBRIDITY: MEDIATION IN THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

At face value, we have seen that the two parties' claims undermine the elite's relationship to the media, establish populists' own relationship to the media as adversarial and back this up with mediated symbolic performances of disintermediation. Shall we take their word for it? After all they are one of us! But no, I move on to query how the populists' mediated performances themselves address the media, for they are designed and staged with mediation in mind.

The EFF aim to maximise their visibility in the media. To do so, they elaborately orchestrate their disruption of the SONA through escalating promises and performances of drama in an extended phase of rising action. For this purpose, they make entrepreneurial use of digital media, adding a banner to their website with a clock counting down the days, hours, minutes and seconds to the big SONA showdown. They also make extensive use of Twitter to build up to the climax of disruption through provocations and responses to unfolding media stories on the upcoming event. In the early stages of the build-up, EFF leader Malema speaks to the media's news values and thirst for action in a tweet: "For the first time in the history of the South Africa, something is going to happen in the #SONA" (EFF_tweet31). Continuing to build up tension in the period leading up to the big event, he posts an image of a smug-looking Zuma with the incendiary caption "We are ready for u boy" (EFF_tweet32) (see Figure 4.1).

Through these tweets, the EFF use the affordances of Twitter to enhance the adversarial appearance of their relationship to President Zuma and to initiate hashtagged public conversation about the impending drama. They thereby both speak to mainstream media's preference for conflict frames (Esser and Strömbäck, 2014, pp. 144–5) and to the Twitter public's interest in discussing politics – preferably using humour and irony (Freelon and Karpf, 2015; Wilson, 2011) – through hashtagged conversations (Bruns and Burgess, 2011). They push a frame that redefines the purpose of the event and that clashes with the official narrative: #PayBackTheMoney.

The mainstream press eagerly lap up the EFF's irresistible drama and call the public's attention to the impending entertainment (EFF_news8; EFF_news9; EFF_news10; EFF_news11; EFF_news12)[34]. The newspaper *Business Day* (EFF_news9) even imitates the EFF's device of the ticking clock to introduce drama and suspense in their online version. The press frequently quote the EFF's tweets, especially those that provocatively establish an adversarial relationship between the EFF and the elite (for instance, EFF_news13). This successful correspondence between the projected and mediated performances during the build-up to the disruptive climax results in an unprecedented public Twitter engagement during the actual broadcast event (du Plessis, 2015): as the SONA 2015 begins, the hashtags #SONA and #SONA2015 experience a peak on Twitter of 348,755 tweets[35] (and the volume is exceeded in 2017 with 401,931 tweets on the day of the SONA).

As the SONA 2015 gets underway and the climax nears, the EFF's use of Twitter shifts from building up to the climax and becomes integral to the party's live performance. It creates what I in the previous chapter defined as hybrid mediation where virtual and physical social realities overtly intersect as, for example, tweets remediate a live performance aimed at mainstream media, yet constitute original virtual performances in and of themselves. We saw in chapter eight that disruptive performances function as meta-performances that dissect elite performance. The EFF's live tweets, as part of the party's hybrid mediation, are in this sense a form of meta-meta-performance that observes and interprets the party's own live disruptive performance in real-time. The EFF use Twitter to mediate aspects of the performance that no other medium can, in a way that at once forms part of and interprets the live broadcast event. For instance, commenting, "Tension as Zuma starts speaking" (EFF_tweet33), the EFF explicitly describe the tension, yet performatively engender it by promising drama to come through a sense of liveness that co-opts the audience and inspires authenticity. They simultaneously interpret the ritual of the SONA in a way that strains its fusion as its status as performance is made explicit.

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[34] In this respect, the newspaper *The New Age* conspicuously stands out as it ignores the EFF and the impending disruption until several days after the 2015 SONA. Only an unwarranted level of partisanship can ignore such a spectacular media event. The newspaper is owned by the Guptas, an Indian-South African family who owns a business empire and is controversially known for their close relationship to Jacob Zuma.

[35] Volume of tweets, including retweets, on the day of the SONA, 12 February 2015.

Yet it is also clear that the EFF's mediation on Twitter is only effective when it forms part of a hybrid assemblage of mediated performances; it cannot stand alone as a means of managing visibility. The ways in which the EFF use digital mediation in an integral way highlights the hybrid nature of the media system – and its demand for hybridity. Despite elaborate staging on Twitter over a month in advance, Google search interest in the SONA does not pick up until a few days before the live event[36], and neither does Twitter activity on #PayBackTheMoney and #SONA/#SONA2015. The EFF need their live disruptive performance to capture public and media attention; Twitter's function is to build up to and complement a climax in the form of a live media event.

An analysis of Twitter activity in relation to moments of the EFF's live performance (Figure 10.1) demonstrates that it is their live provocations, humour and violence in parliament that generate the unprecedented public response rates on Twitter and highly retweeted tweets by legacy media Twitter accounts. Disruption is what engenders mediation. When the action kicks off with the first EFF MP, Gardee, interrupting the speaker, "May we ask the President as to when he is going pay the money in terms of what the Public Protector has said?" and jokingly asking whether he will pay "by EFT, cash or eWallet" (EFF_live1), Twitter activity shoots up instantaneously (Figure 10.1, 19:28hrs) with a spike of 2,403 tweets per minute commenting on the incident. This level of activity is then almost doubled in a new spike of excitement when the speaker predictably evicts Malema and his fellow EFF MPs from the House (Figure 10.1, 19:39hrs).

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[36] Based on Google Trends analysis of the search terms "pay back the money", "SONA", "SONA2015" and "state of the nation" in the period 1 January 2015 to 26 February 2015.
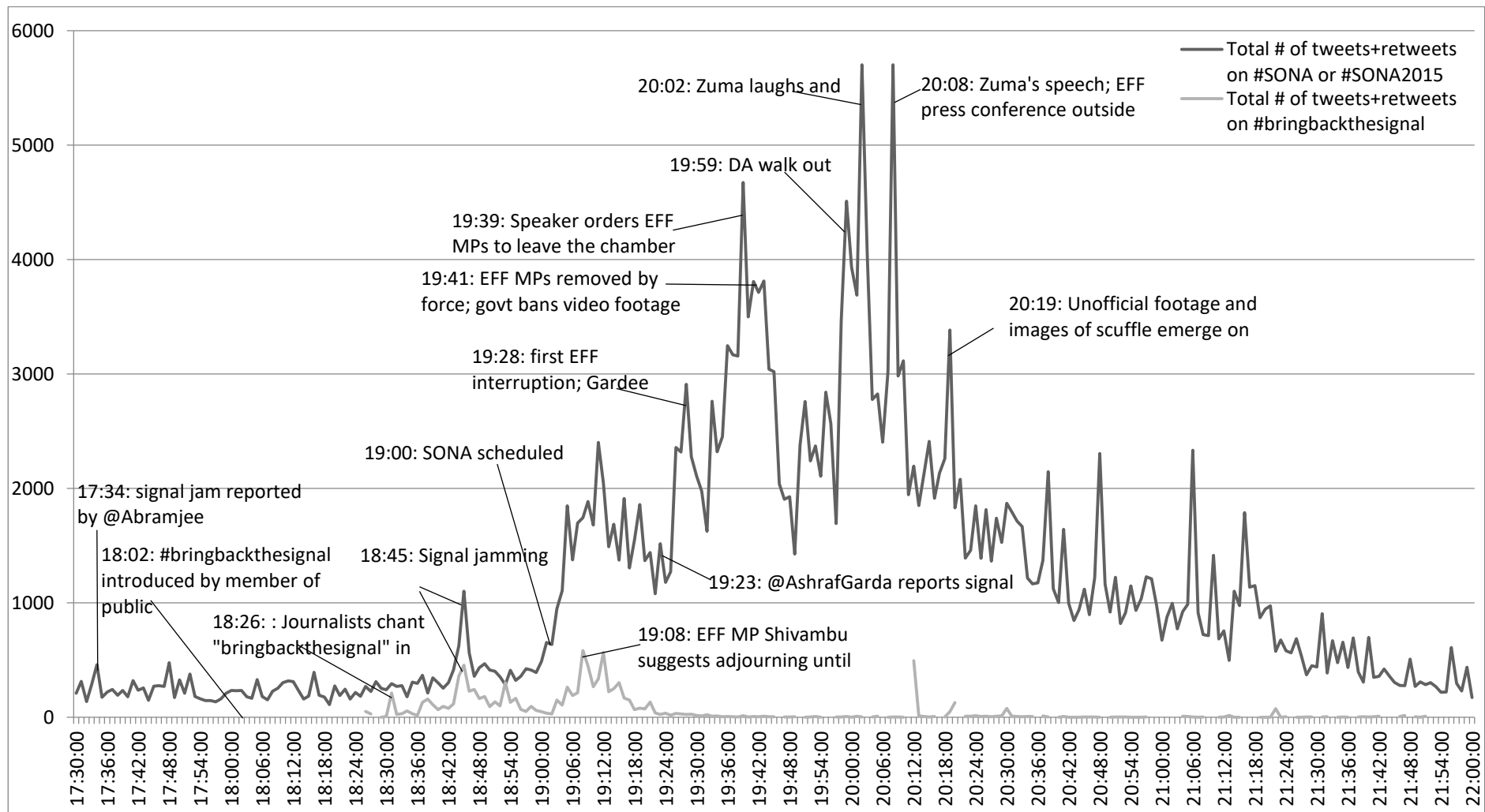
FIGURE 10.1: Tweets per minute during the SONA, 12 February 2015 (local time) (only journalists and public figures have been identified by their Twitter account names for ethical reasons).

As I argued above, the EFF use the affordances of Twitter for symbolic purposes in their hybrid mediation. When security officers are called in to evict them, the EFF tweet simply, "#Asijiki" ('No retreat') (EFF_tweet34). The Twitter imaginaries of emancipation (Gerbaudo, 2014) and collectivity (Couldry, 2015a) evoked by their use of the hashtag sign augment the emotional force of the EFF's rallying cry. The hashtag is less used for its affordances of organising conversation and archival indexing on Twitter than for its mythical properties. Indeed, no conversation takes place. Rather, this is a 'performance of mediation'; that is, an act of mediation that is undertaken for its symbolic significance. #Asijiki is consistent with the EFF's self-representation as fearless martyrs, with their use of the freedom struggle as a fundamental background symbol, and with their narrow conception of 'the people' as indigenous South Africans who speak local languages.

Similarly to the EFF, UKIP make entrepreneurial use of the new media environment in ways that build up and complement live disruptions aimed at broadcast audiences. Farage takes to Twitter to warn that "Sparks will fly" (UKIP_tweet8) in a build-up of tension before his provocative EP speech on the UK's triggering of Article 50 that commenced her exit from the EU. UKIP's mediated build-up to individual speeches, however, is much less elaborate than the EFF's. For instance, in the case of Farage's momentous post-referendum speech on 28 June 2016, neither UKIP nor Farage send a single tweet or publish any press releases to gain media attention for the historic occasion. Farage's EU referendum speech may be the climax of an extended media campaign that has been slowly built up through the media over years of rising action. Yet the speech itself is not a media event that is broadcast live directly to UKIP's constituents, and legacy media is present as a matter of course.

In addition to the structure of the performance, the hybridity of UKIP's online and offline mediation is also of a different nature from that of the EFF. Unlike the EFF, UKIP chiefly tweet after, not during, their live performances. Most of their tweets direct attention to other communications, such as YouTube videos of Farage's speeches, Facebook posts, press releases and columns in the press, rather than to live moments. Their audience is legacy media, not a live broadcast audience. Yet their tweets still form an integral part of UKIP's overall hybrid mediated performance as they

supplement, comment on and interpret UKIP's live symbolic action after the event. In fact, the tweets often spell out and enhance the symbolism of UKIP's disruptive performances, such as when UKIP explicitly point out their character of protest – "@Nigel_Farage leads UKIP MEPs in a protest against the European Parliament at the opening of its new session" (UKIP_tweet13) – labour the metaphor of their turned backs – "UKIP MEPs turn their backs on the EU flag as the EU anthem played" (UKIP_tweet14) – or insist that such symbolic action is indeed rather disruptive (UKIP_tweet15). Such tweets feed a particular interpretation of UKIP's live performances to the media.

Another example of this interpretive function of social media takes the form of a promotional YouTube video (UKIP_vid1) that UKIP create of the EP opening ceremony (Figure 4.7). The disdainful video features Farage in a supposedly backstage moment having a conversation with a fellow MEP in which he sneers at the "nationalist militarism" of the ceremony. This supposedly private-conversation-made-public is portrayed as fully consistent with Farage's frontstage behaviour, resonating with arguments he provocatively puts directly to the EP and in public newspaper columns, even using the same expressions and phrases. The mediation of Farage's performance in the video thereby stands in contrast to the inconsistencies between front- and back-stage behaviour that the elite exhibit in their attempts to manage visibility with pompous rituals. The privately revelatory nature of the moment is preserved by using the direct and personal interaction afforded by social media as a symbolic resource. It is thus also consistent with UKIP's performance of 'ordinariness' by bringing backstage behaviour to the front stage and by exhibiting consistency between online and offline mediated behaviour in a manner that inspires authenticity.

UKIP's tweets, like the EFF's, bring out the adversarial and norm-breaking characteristics of the live performance. Yet their asynchronicity with the live events reduces their opportunities for generating visibility and for engendering a sense of community and intimacy through live-tweeting to a present audience who share the experience of the event in real-time. The EFF's live-tweeting, in contrast, utilises the potential of Twitter's affordances for "calling networked publics into being and into action during periods of political instability" (Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira, 2012,

p. 268), such as the volatile periods created by their own disruptions. The reasons behind these different compositions of and approaches to hybrid mediation by the two parties lie in their external conditions. Let us consider three such contextual explanations.

First, one difference consists in the nature of the SONA as a prime-time broadcast event with a large live audience and a long enough mediated climax to sustain live tweeting. UKIP's mediated performances usually happen mid-morning, in the supranational setting of the EP, and are not broadcast live. This results in a low number of live tweeters. These logistics, over which UKIP have no control, mean that their events are not national media events like the SONA, nor are they social media events that generate hashtags of their own. In the case of Farage's climactic EU referendum 'victory speech' in June 2016, only 332 relevant unique tweets (4163 with retweets) are posted during his live 8-minute-long performance. Although a distinct relationship between live performance and Twitter activity is still discernible (see Figure 10.2 below), it is mainly media institutions and established actors who are the drivers of public reactions on Twitter. For their disruptive performances, UKIP's main audience is not live on Twitter, nor are they natural Twitter users. Indeed, the small and select live Twitter audience is very partisan in their dislike of Farage, with adjectives such as "gloating", "smug" and "embarrassing" recurring frequently. The main purpose of UKIP's tweets is therefore to gain the attention of mainstream media rather than a live watching audience or select constituency. UKIP then use the climax of the symbolic action itself to make it appear newsworthy and representative of a large of constituency so as to persuade an audience of media institutions to extract clips that will reach their constituency.

Second, the context of a transitional democracy conditions the EFF's mediation. Their tweets may be the most effective means of getting their message through to the public as the government is pushing for control of mainstream media. While in the SONA 2015, the government's attempt to block the mobile telephone signal was quickly thwarted, they also censored the live broadcast, preventing the SABC from showing footage of EFF MPs. UKIP can and do use a variety of channels – mainstream media

interviews, columns in the press, Farage's LBC radio show – and use Twitter to direct public and media attention to these other more detailed communications.

Third, the political context of the EFF's mediation provides opportunities as well as constraints: the relatively fragile institutional norms of the South African parliament can easily be disrupted in quite spectacular and lengthy fashion; and, as we saw in chapter eight, the EFF can turn the government's illegitimate use of social power into a valuable performative resource. The EFF are able to get their message clearly across through processes of mediation by means of extended and explicit symbolic action. UKIP, however, are restricted by rigid institutional norms and are forced to rely on much more sedate and implicit symbolic action. Their meaning instead needs to be established and enhanced through mediation. This is the interpretive function of their tweets, to pointing out that their performance is indeed relatively disruptive and extraordinary. This is necessary to underscore the less disruptive symbolic act and ensure their message is clearly mediated and its disruptive character properly established in the mediated performance.
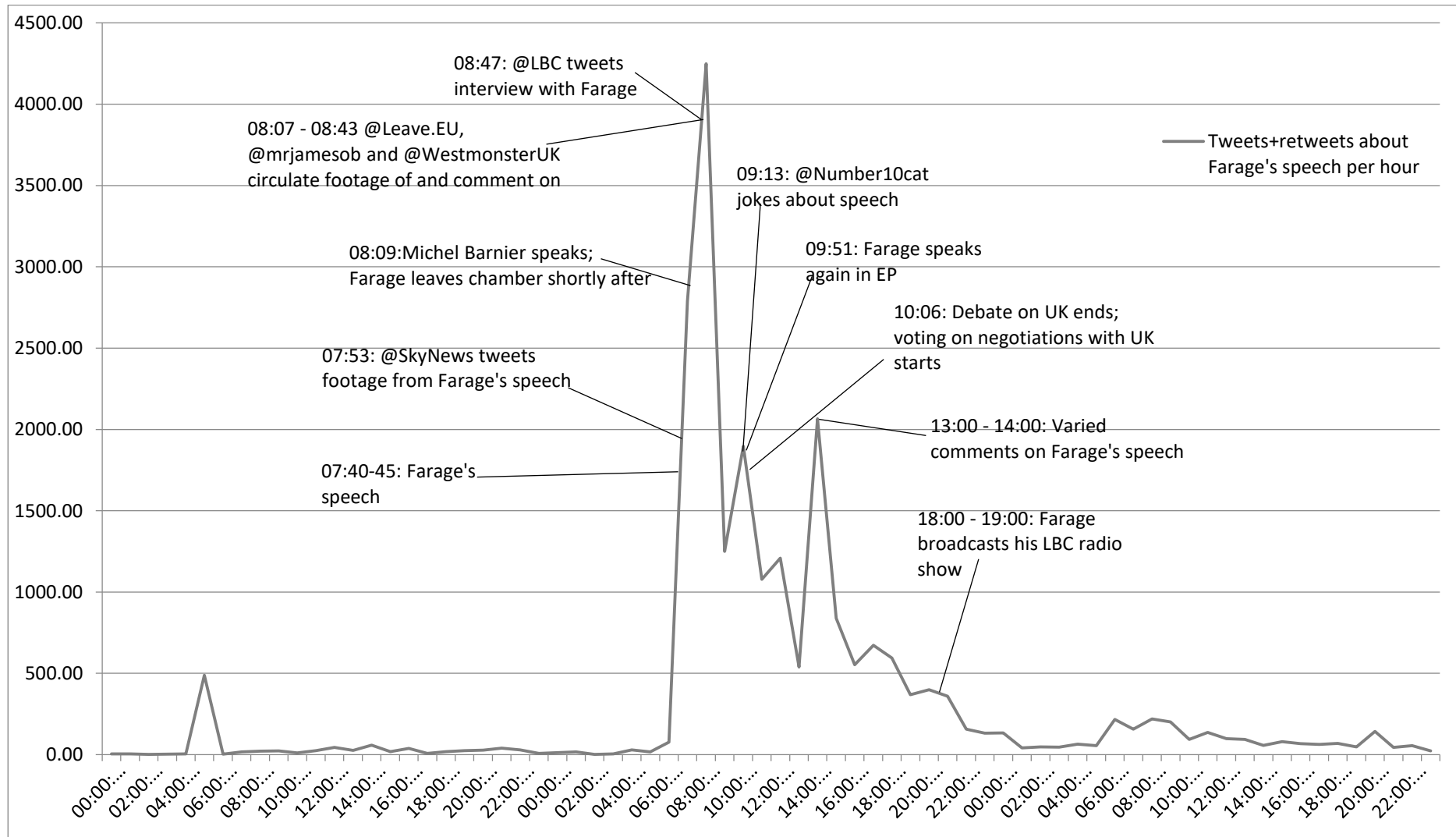
FIGURE 10.2: Tweets and retweets per hour about Farage's speech in the EP on the triggering of Article 50, 4-6 April 2017 (in GMT)

10.3.2 Audiences and constituents

In chapter nine I noted that populists (like other representatives) at times speak *to* an audience that is distinct from the constituency they claim to speak *for*. Where their immediate audience is legacy media and the goal is getting their message unscathed past its gate-keepers, demonstrating constituents' uptake of a populist performance through other modes of mediation can be an essential means of providing justification for media coverage. The two populist parties utilise the hybridity of the media system for this very purpose. Their careful assemblage of variously mediated performances constitutes a complex hybridity able to address different audiences with nuanced symbolic messages.

UKIP are, for instance, eager to point out their constituency support when Farage uses Twitter to boast about his Facebook uptake, as we saw in the opening to this chapter: "Thrilled that 4 million people have taken the time to watch my speech in the European Parliament yesterday" (UKIP_tweet11). Farage's tweet demonstrates the fluidity and complexity inherent in hybrid and cross-platform mediation. His tweet is a mediated performance that originates on Twitter; but it also remediates a Facebook post that is itself a remediation of Farage's broadcast speech. Farage thus uses hybrid cross-platform mediation to demonstrate his representational qualities by giving evidence to a narrow elite audience on Twitter (that includes legacy media) of his constituency support demonstrated by his Facebook 'Likes'. He thereby claims his right to mainstream media visibility. UKIP's use of Twitter and other social media symbiotically interacts with their live disruptions in forms of hybrid mediation aimed at managing visibility.

In his live performances Farage is clearly aware of his audience and his mediation potential. As he is about to start his Article 50 speech (UKIP_live2), he glances directly up at the camera (Figure 4.11), catching its eye and betraying his awareness of the wider broadcast audience that he may garner by provoking his secondary but physically present audience of MEPs. As his glance at the camera shows, these elite colleagues are in fact not the audience he is concerned with; they are his props, his means of symbolic production. As it is for his tweet above, the primary audience he must have in mind is legacy media, and his focus is on mediation. EP plenaries are rarely broadcast live in the UK (if they are, nobody watches them, and certainly not

UKIP's constituents). Farage must therefore appeal to an audience of media institutions to extract newsworthy clips from his performance.

The EFF also use Twitter to demonstrate constituency support to legacy media. Malema, for instance, provocatively challenges the ANC "to go fill the grand stand of Metlhareng and I will resign. Not the grounds, just the grandstands" (EFF_tweet35) because "Only 15 people came to their march" (EFF_tweet36). The EFF's own uptake, in contrast to this representation of the elite's, is amply demonstrated by their Twitter account profile picture and other frequently tweeted pictures of stadiums filled to the brim with fervent supporters and crowds chanting alongside them in the streets.

The EFF's use of Twitter, however, does not stand alone as a means to manage their visibility *vis-à-vis* legacy media. It is integral to an assemblage of smaller acts that together constitute a hybrid mediated performance. While the EFF push the hashtag #PayBackTheMoney on Twitter, they also print it on T-shirts they wear during a press event (EWN Reporter, 2015), thereby echoing the "nano-media"[37] strategies of South African civil society groups who do not have access to mainstream media coverage (Dawson, 2012; Wasserman et al., 2018). This is another use of technology for symbolic purposes, a performance of mediation. Through media associated with the widespread bottom-up civil society protests against the government's lack of responsiveness, the EFF identify themselves with the people. As 'the media of the people' media types such as nano-media – the EFF's printed T-shirts and their red overalls – and social media are symbolic statements of resemblance. Media become means of symbolic production.

As a result of the EFF's mediated build-up to the SONA, on the day of the big event the hashtag is picked up by radio and TV personality Gareth Cliff who simply tweets "#PayBackTheMoney" as proceedings in Parliament are about to start (EFF_mediatweet2). With celebrities being some of the most influential actors on Twitter (see for example Cha et al., 2010), this tweet becomes the most popular (retweeted) tweet about the SONA on the day, successfully sealing the EFF's definition of the occasion through mediation. By strategically distinguishing between elite

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[37] The term 'nano-media' is coined by Pajnik and Downing (2008) in the context of social movements and their ability to create impact through nano-technologies. It refers to media such as popular song, dance, street theatre, graffiti, murals, dress and digital technologies.

audiences and constituents in their symbolic communications and thereby demonstrating their representativeness to mainstream media, combined with media spectacle through disruption of elite ritual, the EFF's hybrid mediation sets the agenda and shapes the mediated representation of reality across all media formats.

10.3.3 CONSEQUENCES OF VISIBILITY MANAGEMENT AND STRUGGLES OVER MEDIATION

We have seen that the two populist parties' use of the hybrid media system at once expose the elite's visibility management practices and manage the parties' own visibility by appealing to the media. I now move on to consider the behaviour these acts of mediation bring about in the elite from the perspective of visibility. As elites respond to the populist parties' threats to their visibility, both intended and unintended consequences arise, and they differ substantially between the two cases.

The EFF's elaborate build-up in the media to their climactic disruption of the SONA effects changes in the elite's behaviour. It increases their anxiety over their threatened visibility to the extent that they prepare to – and do – transgress liberal democratic practice in a last-ditch attempt at control. The government escalate police presence in advance of the SONA. In attempts to control the mediated reality, they also block the mobile telephone signal in the parliamentary chamber to prevent journalists from using the affordances of internet-based media and report on the expected disruption, and they ban media from showing the ruckus of the EFF's expulsion from the House. The day before the SONA the government allegedly cause the closure of Robben Island to prevent an EFF press conference from taking place (EFF_press10). While it is unlikely that the government would have undertaken these actions – some of which constitute outright authoritarian attempts at controlling visibility – without the EFF's threats to their visibility, they also play directly into the EFF's hands.

Digital media, and Twitter in particular, play a central role in circumventing and defying such authoritarian attempts at controlling mediation but also of turning them into performative resources. Indeed, as we saw in the opening to this chapter, the EFF tweet, "They were obsessed with EFF and they tamper with fundamental right of media freedom" (EFF_tweet37). The government's actions only feed the EFF's legitimacy. In a similar vein, Malema responds to the sudden closure of Robben Island

by tweeting, "I refuse to wrestle with a pig in the mud because it will always emerge victorious" (EFF_tweet38). The EFF's adaptability in incorporating the ANC's dubitable reaction to their threatened visibility proves a success as Malema's tweet becomes the most retweeted tweet by both Malema and the EFF in the entire sample period[38]. Instead of limiting the EFF's options for mediation as they intend, the government ends up becoming part of the EFF's hybrid mediated performances.

By becoming a resource for, rather than an obstruction to, mediation, the government's reactions also reinforce the cleavage in the political spectrum that the EFF have worked so hard to construct. Many journalists defy the government's public disorder clause that is aimed at preventing the mediation of footage of the EFF's disruption of the SONA 2015. They circulate footage on Twitter of the fight in parliament, and these tweets cause large spikes in volumes of activity (see Figure 10.1, at 20:19 hrs) as they are recirculated. Moreover, it is a member of the public who intervenes through Twitter, asking journalists in the chamber to chant #BringBackTheSignal (see Figure 10.1, at 18:02 hrs), which then results in the unscrambling of the mobile telephone signal in parliament. Media freedom proves a useful script for performing populist Manichaean ideology: it is the government against everyone else – the EFF, mainstream media and the public. In this context Twitter becomes a means of not only circumventing difficult conditions for visibility but of turning the government's authoritarian weapons against themselves, thereby strengthening the EFF's claim through its mediation.

The success of the EFF's hybrid mediation is evident in the focus of legacy media on the reactions by the elite that the EFF's performances provoke. At a press conference (see Figure 4.3; EFF_conf2) outside Parliament after their eviction from the SONA 2015, journalists lap up the spectacular conflict generated by the EFF's disruptive performance and the ANC's response. The first follow-up question after Malema's statement to the press directly invites him to reinforce the justification for the EFF's disruption by absorbing the ANC's reaction into his narrative: "It must be a sad day for the South African Parliament that something like that will happen?" suggests a journalist. The question allows Malema to confirm how the ANC's actions have

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[38] 1 January to 27 February 2015.

degraded South African democracy. He portrays the government's response as not only authoritarian but also unnecessarily immoral, using the beating of a female EFF MP as a case in point: "It's a sad day," he confirms, "that elected representatives that can be beaten by police and eh including women eh Reneiloe Mashabela was held by not less than seven men. One of them was beating her on the face - with a *shoe*!" (EFF_conf2; italics denote verbal emphasis).

Most newspaper headlines on the morning after the SONA 2015 and in the days that follow report the events with words such as "chaos", "pandemonium", "drama" and "protest" (EFF_news2; EFF_news14; EFF_news15; EFF_news16), avidly describing the government's transgression of democratic rules and the tumultuous events they seek to hide. Few reports mention the contents of Zuma's speech, except to note how it failed to reflect the true "state of the nation" (EFF_news14), as the EFF also point out in their official reply to the SONA (EFF_press3). As many members of the public cynically suggest on Twitter, the state of the nation was better reflected by the disorder in parliament (for example, TwitterUser2). The Twitter public may not unanimously endorse the EFF's disruptive behaviour, but they agree with its projected claim against the government; there can be no doubt that the EFF have succeeded in redefining the purpose of the SONA.

Unfortunately for the EFF, perhaps, their mediation success results in their monopoly on truth-telling being challenged in the SONA in 2017. Other opposition parties join them as uninvited participants in their disruptive performance, initiating interruptions that imitate the EFF's in previous years, even before the EFF get a chance to begin the show (EFF_live2). The force of the EFF's own visibility management and mediation potential is then weakened. Media coverage of their role in the event is significantly more limited than it was in 2015. The public on Twitter, as in 2015, react with peaks in volume to the extreme moments of the event in real-time. There is largely united condemnation of Zuma but no consensus around support of any one other party or voice. The infection of disruption amongst South Africa's opposition parties is a success in terms of the EFF's stated goal of pressurising Zuma. But it is also an appropriation of their personal visibility maximising strategy and of their control over processes of mediation.

UKIP's mediated disruptions also have consequences for the political process, if on an altogether different scale from those of the EFF. We have seen how Farage often manages to provoke reactions from his audience within the EP that are themselves norm-breaking: boos, catcalls and laughter. When met with loud shouts of protest and heckling at the start of his climactic post-referendum speech, Farage gives a satisfied grin (UKIP_live1). These intended reactions by the elite to UKIP's disruptions certainly do not breach the Constitution, like the South African government, and are consequently rarely sufficiently disruptive to themselves attract mainstream media attention. The (very limited) mediation of such events on Twitter is accompanied by public criticism of both UKIP's and other MEPs' behaviour, which Twitter users deem degrading to democracy.

As is the case with the EFF, however, UKIP's attempts to meet the demands of mediation also have unintended consequences. Before Farage's first speech in an institutional setting after the EU referendum – an emergency plenary in the EP on 28 June 2016, called to discuss the controversial results of the UK referendum – the EU authorities allegedly look into removing the speaking rights of UK MEPs in a move to deny Farage a platform (Millar, 2017). While we have seen that the institutional rigidity of the EP restricts the level of disruption that UKIP is able to perform, on this occasion these same legal and political hindrances work to retain their speaking rights (ibid.) and consequent chance of mediation. Social power in the setting of the EP remains legitimate and does not unduly restrict UKIP's means of symbolic production and mediation, as the government does in the case of the EFF. At the same time, the very legitimacy of the EP's use of social power deprives UKIP of fuel for their fire; they do not get the opportunity to turn misuses of social power into resources that strengthen the legitimacy of their claim and its consequent mediation as we saw was the case with the EFF. Instead of denying Farage a platform, the extraordinary political developments in the UK, fulfilling UKIP's goal of withdrawing Britain from the EU, now culminate for Farage with his rightfully earned moment in the limelight as an MEP.

UKIP are, like the EFF, occasionally upstaged by competing actors who choose to engage in the struggle over mediation in an equally entrepreneurial fashion. Yet UKIP are less fortunate with respect to these unintended consequences than their South African counterparts. These competing attempts at mediation – which disrupt UKIP's

disruptions – tickle mainstream media more than even UKIP's own performances and succeed in snatching the media agenda before UKIP's eyes. One such case in point is Farage's arch enemy Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission. In advance of Farage's post-referendum speech, he anticipates Farage's intervention. Upon meeting Farage for the first time after the EU referendum, he theatrically greets him and air kisses him in 'European' fashion (see Figure 4.9). Within the chamber, Juncker then loudly proclaims, to loud applause, "I am really surprised you are here... Why are you here?" (UKIP_live1). Both mainstream media and Twitter enthusiastically report on this sarcastic act by Juncker, which steals the headlines and newspaper image space (UKIP_news5; UKIP_news6; UKIP_news7; UKIP_news8; UKIP_news9; UKIP_news10; UKIP_news11; UKIP_news18).

In a similar hijacking of visibility, Farage's provocative speech in February 2017 in the EP on Trump's travel ban is upstaged by the innocuous British Labour MEP Seb Dance. As Farage responds to the Chair's admonition that he will show "institutional respect to the truth" (UKIP_live4), not to the Commission, Dance holds up a handwritten sign within shot of the camera, saying "He's lying to you". Until this point only a handful of tweets engage with Farage's speech, none of them getting more than one retweet. This is a non-social media event. Suddenly, however, the Twitter public get excited. Within a minute of Dance holding up his sign, images are circulated by journalists (see Figure 10.3 at 15:07hrs) and create the first peak in Twitter activity. The event then dominates comments from both media organisations and the public on Twitter. Practically all peaks in Twitter volume, including the biggest peak related to the event, are almost single-handedly caused by journalists and news organisations tweeting the picture of Farage and Dance with his sign (UKIP_mediatweet1; UKIP_mediatweet2; UKIP_mediatweet3) and members of the public retweeting them.

While Dance's intervention in and of itself no doubt generates increased activity levels on Twitter, it also sparks a Twitter 'Moments' (Twitter's own news service) report on the event (UKIP_media1), which is further circulated by the public. In this case, Twitter as a media institution – rather than as technology or imaginary – intervenes and encourages virality. Legacy media also entirely focus on Dance's sign, which dominates all headlines and images in articles on Farage's speech (see Figure 4.10) (UKIP_news12; UKIP_news13; UKIP_news14; UKIP_news15). Seb Dance (2017) himself afterwards

refers to the restrictions on intervention within the EP as a justification for his act: "When debates are time-limited it is impossible to challenge what he's saying, so I protested in the only way I knew how at that point". That was via mediation. While the institutional restrictions in some cases limit possibilities for both disruption and mediation, they also in others encourage them as the only possible means of communication. This means that engineering symbolic action to attract visibility by creating conflict frames to the media's liking is not the prerogative of populist parties; it is a competitive field.
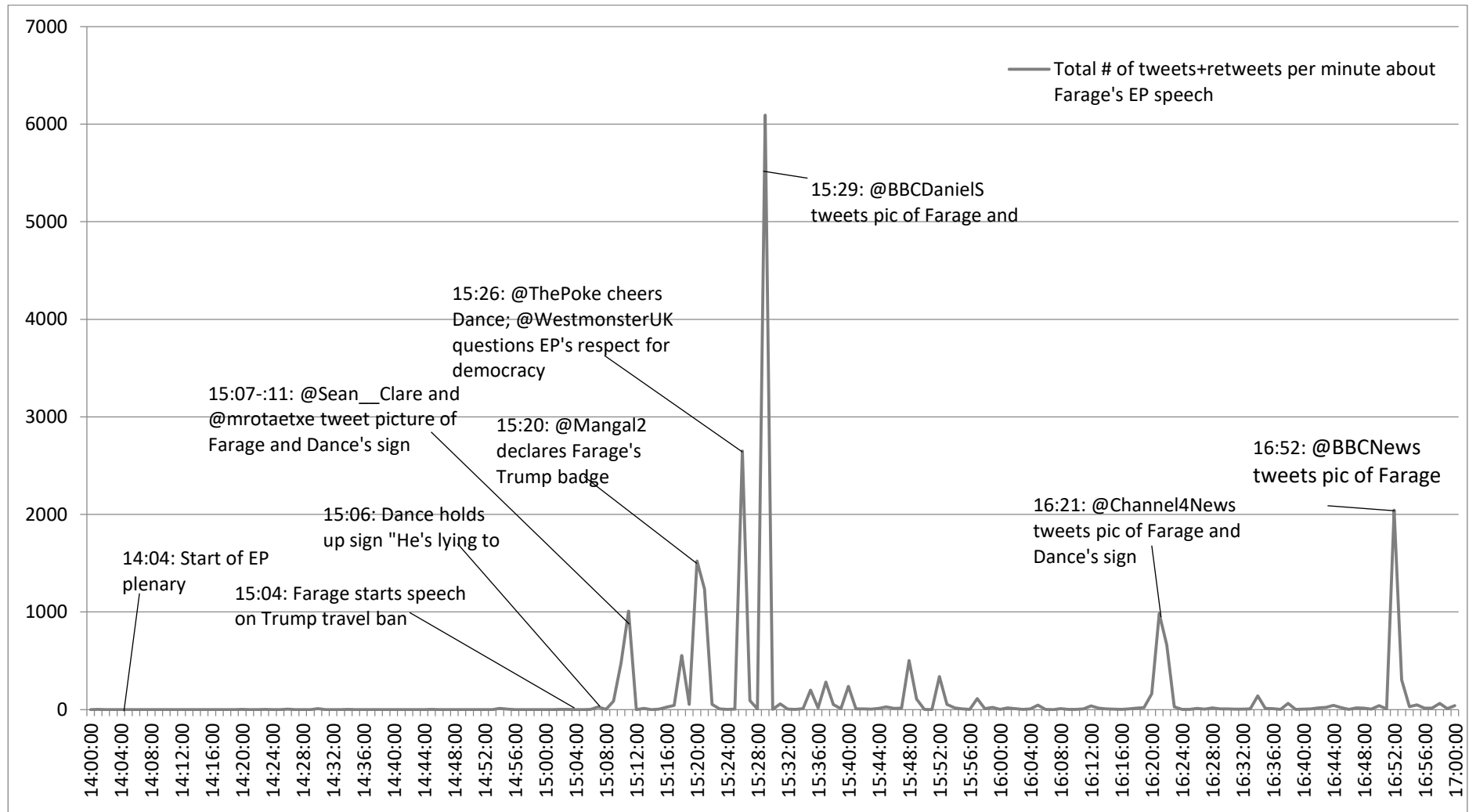
Figure 10.3: Total # of tweets and retweets per minute about Farage's EP speech, 1 February 2017

10.4 CONSTRUCTING AUTHENTICITY THROUGH HYBRID MEDIATION

UKIP's and the EFF's approaches to hybrid mediation serve an additional purpose. In chapter eight I explored populist disruptive performance as a vehicle of spontaneity, intimacy and consistency that together generate authentic self-representation. I now consider the ways in which the parties augment these performances of authenticity through hybrid mediation. I argue that social media in many respects have comparable qualities to disruption in terms of the performance of authenticity. Further, given these parallels, the hybrid mediation of disruption and social media posts generate consistency *between* these mediated performances, which further enhances the impression of authenticity. Moreover, I look at the special case of the EFF where their self-representation as truth-tellers takes the form of performatively usurping the role of impartial broadcaster of events. That is, they do not only aim to get their performance mediated; they perform the role of mediators.

10.4.1 THE MEDIATION OF AUTHENTICITY

Like disruption, social media, and Twitter in particular, are famed for their spontaneous quality whereby short impromptu tweets can be sent instantaneously and on-the-go, often mediating backstage behavioural traits that would be kept better guarded in other media. Both disruptions and tweets are often pre-planned and carefully crafted. Yet the affordances of tweets carry the symbolic value of spontaneity in and of themselves and give the impression that the audience is getting a glimpse of the 'real' persona rather than the carefully staged front delivered in a broadcast interview through rehearsed soundbites. Both parties reinforce this impression by using emotive and informal language in their tweets and apparently reacting spontaneously to news and events as they unfold. Farage, for instance, reacts with an emotional outburst to the news that the EU have asked the UK for a £500 billion 'divorce bill' by calling Guy Verhofstadt "a lunatic" (UKIP_tweet16). Malema simply tweets "Hahahahahahahah" (EFF_tweet39) when Zuma a few days after the SONA delivers his response in parliament to the events that occurred.

The intimacy brought by both parties' claims to resemble the people they represent is also reinforced by such performances of mediation. Both the affordances of social media, such as liveness and disintermediation, and the norms and style associated

with its discourse invite intimacy. Malema often demonstrates his resemblance to the people by conforming to Twitter's informal style. He is an avid user of emoticons, popular memes and Twitter-specific vocabulary, such as "Throwback Thursday"[39] (EFF_tweet40), as well as general slang not normally associated with formal political communication: "Take a chill pill. Don't be tjatjarag[40]" (EFF_tweet41). Farage likewise establishes intimacy via Twitter by using informal language and using content that enhances his symbolic use of affordances and style, for instance interspersing his political comments with updates on his lunch venue: "Just had a wonderful lunch at @warwickpimlico… Great London pub" (UKIP_tweet17). Such tweets by Farage also tend to be among his most popular on Twitter. However, Farage and UKIP more often than not address their audience of legacy media directly, rather than their constituents: "Here is the resolution that the @EFDgroup will be putting forward in the European Parliament #Brexit debate" (UKIP_tweet9). Given the nature of their events and Twitter audience discussed above, UKIP are less able to establish authenticity directly through this form of mediation than are the EFF.

For the EFF especially, the informality of Twitter's style lends itself to the mediation of backstage behaviour, achieving a similar sense of intimacy and spontaneity as through disruptive performance. As I noted in the preceding chapter, consistency between offline and online performance is an essential requirement for authentic self-representation on social media (Grow and Ward, 2013; Marwick, 2005, p. 2). In hybrid mediation in particular, such consistency is essential as the offline and online components work in symbiosis. In this respect, UKIP's and the EFF's hybrid mediation allow them to stylistically distinguish themselves from the elite. At the same time, they can identify with the people in a manner that is at once consistent with their ideology and with the affordances and norms of use of social media. Moreover, within the hybrid mediation of their performances, their mediated offline disruptive behaviour is consistent with their authenticity on social media. It is consistency all round.

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[39] #ThrowbackThursday and the abbreviation #TBT are popular hashtags on social media where users post nostalgic pictures of their past.

[40] The Urban Dictionary defines 'tjatjarag' as being "over-eager and excitable in an annoying manner" ("Urban Dictionary," n.d.)

10.4.2 IMPLICATIONS OF MEDIATED AUTHENTICITY: REDEFINING TRUTH

In the preceding chapters we have seen how UKIP's and the EFF's representative claims undermine the position of the political elite as truthful providers of the information necessary for democratic decision-making. They portray elites and experts as devious, deceiving the people and hollowing out democracy. In this portrayal, ideology no longer matters. A different cleavage emerges in the ideological spectrum whereby all politicians appear to be the same. We have also seen that the two parties portray the media as biased and unobjective, unable to fulfil their democratic function in society. Thompson (2005, p. 39) argues that,

> the media had the capacity to make visible arenas of action that were previously hidden from view, and since they created a complex field of images and information flows that were very difficult to control, they could also give rise to new kinds of mediated events which had the potential to disrupt and undermine the carefully calculated self-presentations of political leaders and others.

By discrediting the media's ability to faithfully portray social and political reality, the populist parties construct a gap in the market for truth-telling. Moreover, they take on this function of the media themselves described by Thompson by virtue of their authenticity. As visibility entrepreneurs and the only moral and sincere representatives of the people, *they* now expose and mediate the inauthenticity of elites. And, as we have seen, their own authenticity equates to truth.

We saw above that the nature of the SONA as a media event gives the EFF the opportunity to live-tweet during the event. They are thereby able to contest the government's attempts to control mediation with their use of Twitter in a way that UKIP cannot. When the ANC ban the public broadcaster from showing the ruckus in parliament, the EFF take up the fight over mediated reality on Twitter: "SABC has been instructed not to show EFF MPs" (EFF_tweet30). They proceed to live-tweet reports of events during the SONA every few minutes and convey in graphic and visual detail all the to-do not shown by the SABC to a rapt national audience. Twitter is a well-established tool of live news transmission (Bruns and Burgess, 2012; Larsson, 2015). With these mediations the EFF adopt the style of tweeting that Larsson in his typology

denotes Twitter's broadcasting function (2015). In doing so, they effectively usurp the role of the public broadcaster. Representing themselves as mediators of the truth, the EFF succeed in performatively constructing a reality where they are the sole remaining conveyors of truth, the government the unsuccessful authoritarian censors.

In their acquired role as mediators, the EFF's tweets relate events within the chamber as they unfold. They adopt a descriptive mode with constant updates. Yet their tweets do not live up to media industry standards of impartial, objective reporting. Rather, they combine Twitter's broadcasting mode with interpretive and evaluative functions that clearly defines Us and Them in the essentialist terms of populist ideology. One update, for instance, constructs a binary between EFF MPs as 'proper representatives' and "ANC thugs": "MPs chanting 'Bring Back the Signal' and ANC thugs chanting 'ANC'" (EFF_tweet42). Their broadcasting style of tweeting is a claim to the objectivity and truth that the media usually perform. However, in stepping into the media's shoes and mimicking this style as a symbolic form of self-representation through mediation, the EFF's tweets do not merely serve an impartial function of news reporting. They also construct reality according to populism's ideological division between Us and Them.

10.5 DISCUSSION

The investigation in this chapter of UKIP and the EFF's approaches to the demands of the new media environment for visibility, authenticity and efficacy suggests an effective and nuanced adoption of hybrid modes of mediation by the two parties. Both parties are able to improve the visibility of their disruptive performances and enhance their authenticity by integrating them into assemblages of hybrid mediated performances directed at different audiences. They appear acutely aware of their intended audience – whether constituents or legacy media and other elites – and their needs and interests in a given mode of mediation. Moreover, they utilise the hybridity itself through cross-platform communications that demonstrate constituency support to legacy media in order to justify further mediation. The different nature of the types of events they participate in and of their audiences result in different forms of hybrid mediation for the two parties. Let us first briefly consider these differences before returning to conclude on what the forms of hybrid mediation tell us about populists' approach to the new media environment.

The two parties operate in very different media systems. The ANC's attempts to control mediation through old-school authoritarian means push the EFF to adopt alternative routes and integrate their disruptions with mediation on Twitter. Their resultant hybrid mediation has three key outcomes. It renders the government's censorship ineffective. It increases the EFF's legitimacy as they turn the government's abuse of social power into yet another performative resource. And it enables them to usurp the role of the main broadcaster via Twitter and to define reality – in populist terms – to the large social media audience. South Africa faces the challenge of transitioning to a more open political culture as behaviour and habits from the authoritarian past are hard to leave behind, including corruption and attempts to control the media environment. In this respect, the flexibility of transitional institutions and norms in combination with the new media environment in fact allow for more oppositional agency in holding power-holders to account than does the rigid institutional structures of the European Parliament. The EFF's ability to adapt and respond to their antagonists' attempts at control actively demonstrates the possibilities for such action through hybrid modes of mediation.

In this respect, the EFF's mediated demonstration of their own political agency under conditions that are truly challenging to opposition parties rightfully inspires efficacy. The EFF's mediated performances are able to be spectacularly disruptive in the fragile institutional environment of a transitional democracy and to expose and mediate repressive behaviour by the government under conditions that make the performance of opposition near-impossible. However, consequences of the EFF's disruptions are potentially correspondingly severe, to the extent that democracy risks being destabilised through the performance of a largely liberal democratic claim. Moreover, the EFF's ability to control mediation and pose threats to the government's visibility engenders actual authoritarian behaviour and breaches of the Constitution as the struggle over mediation escalates. Overall, these effects change the premises of political debate and demonstrate how populist hybrid mediation has the potential to change politicians' chosen responses to issues of visibility management. While populists in their claims condemn the elite's visibility management practices, their own forms of hybrid mediation aimed at controlling visibility only serve to escalate this aspect of political communication and the role it plays in representative politics. They

make previously hidden practices visible, but they also refocus politics even more firmly on the performance of visibility and mediation.

In the comparatively serene and controlled environment of the European Parliament, populist threats to elite visibility are more subdued, as are the elite's responses; but the struggle over mediation still bubbles under the surface. In UKIP's case, the nature of their Twitter audience and of the mediated events in the EP mean that Twitter serves a different and more limited role in their assemblage of hybrid mediations. For UKIP, Twitter is not a means of usurping the role of mainstream media but rather of addressing it. The struggle over mediation therefore becomes a battle of who can walk the tightrope of legitimacy and norm-breaking in the most creative way to attract the attention of legacy media. UKIP then use social media to enhance the impression of spectacle by making their norm-breaking more explicit in a mediation setting where such behaviour is more acceptable.

The respective contexts of UKIP and the EFF's mediation result in different forms of hybridity. Yet both parties appeal to media logics and make use of the material affordances of technology and the symbolic resources of social imaginaries associated with social media. It is clear from their use of affordances that these serve not only a pragmatic purpose – such as Twitter's ability to circumvent the gatekeepers of legacy media – but also a symbolic one. Indeed, the audience often *are* the gatekeepers. This interrelation between form and content in the two parties' approach to constructing meaning through mediation in fact responds to gatekeepers' demands for visibility, authenticity and efficacy. The two populist parties can generate and demonstrate these very qualities by performing mediation. Their symbolic uses of media showcase efficacy by demonstrating constituency uptake. They perform authenticity by symbolically enacting intimacy, spontaneity and consistency through their media use. And they thereby enhance visibility both virally and through their legacy media audience. These performances of hybrid mediation demonstrate the inseparability of form and content and the advantages of a communication perspective that can explain this. They also highlight the benefits of comparative and cross-platform research and an approach to mediation that is not restricted to a focus on institutionalism and media logic. Accounting for materiality as well as content and how these feed into

media logics explain how populist communication harmonises with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment.

11. CONCLUSION

11.1 INTRODUCTION

Since I started my doctoral studies in October 2013, populism has spread across the world and exploded on both the academic and political scenes. Populist parties' pervasiveness and strength have allowed the academic debate to take great leaps forward and have disproven the previously dominant argument in the scholarship that they are short-lived, also in power. It seems as though this journey of coming to terms with populism is one that representative democracy and I have undertaken together. We have witnessed populists' engagement with the evolving hybrid media landscape, the growing importance of performing authenticity, and the shifting epistemological foundations of politics. We have lived through the end of Jacob Zuma's reign as president of South Africa and the denouement of UKIP's campaign to extract the United Kingdom from the European Union. There have been spectacle, provocation, humour and violence along the way. Through this journey I have come to feel concern about the communicative craftiness and polarising influence of populist performers and to admire their creativity, flexibility and ability to tap into the concerns of a large part of the electorate that feels left behind.

But of course this journey is not just a personal one. It has implications for democratic politics that are important and which I discuss in this conclusion. I start out, however, by making a set of methodological recommendations for future studies of populist communication. I then address the research questions of this study:

1) **How can populism be understood and explained from a communication perspective?**
2) How is populist ideology constructed through communicative processes?
3) How does disruptive performance communicatively manifest a populist mode of representation?
4) How does populist communication harmonise with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment?
5) How does the comparison across different democratic contexts add to our understanding of populist communication?

As I respond to each of the research questions, I focus on the respective key concept – ideology, performance and mediation – and draw out the contributions of this study. I also reflect on the similarities and differences between the two cases. In the final part of the conclusion I turn to the implications of populism for democratic politics suggested by a communication perspective. I briefly acknowledge populism's favourable aspects in the different democratic contexts I have explored. I then engage with one more problematic issue in particular that emerged as a central theme of my study: populists' redefinition of truth as a basis for an alternative mode of representation.

11.2 Methodological reflections

In this study I sought to develop a method that meets a number of requirements. I wanted to strike a balance between allowing the data to speak through inductive analysis and being informed by theory. I aimed to take advantage of the explorative potential and depth made possible by the interpretive analysis of populist communicative processes but also of the contextualising function offered by quantitative study of their reception and interaction with the media ecology. I required a method that can accommodate mixed forms of data. And I sought to tailor it to the nature of populist communication. The methodological approach that I developed on this basis at first appeared complex. That is because the world is messy, and we need to allow it to be so. However, I followed some simple, general principles that have proved fruitful for the study of populist communication and that I summarise below as recommendations for its future study:

Comparative study across regions and across host ideologies

The lack of comparative studies of populist communication has contributed to not only a delay in resolving conceptual difficulties in the field but to actually creating them too. As more and more studies are rooted in specific regional and host ideological contexts, an already contested concept becomes unhelpfully tied to values, practices, and dependencies that in fact say less about populism than about the values, systems and cultures it attaches itself to. A comparative approach allowed me to isolate populism from its host ideology and cultural context; to tease out the nuances and influences on how populist ideology plays out in transitional versus established democracies, and

generalise on this basis; and to empirically establish the central role of context in populist meaning-making processes. Future studies may benefit from also comparing across party position (opposition versus governing parties).

Situating populist communication within the media ecology

The hybrid media system and its inherent complexity, flexibility and interconnectedness mean that political communication not only travels an unpredictable path through the system; it is itself of a hybrid nature. Studies of political communication confined to a single platform or communication form miss this feature, as well as how it is shaped by the intricacies of a given media system. The notion of hybrid mediated performance that I have suggested here is only in its infancy. However, the nuances and dependencies that have emerged in the present research suggest cross-platform studies of political performance as a fruitful avenue for further exploration of populism as well as of political communication more generally.

An inductive approach

While my analysis confirmed the relevance of my sensitising concepts – ideology, performance and mediation – to populist communicative processes, it also revealed new themes and concepts that emerged as fundamental to a populist mode of representation. Two such concepts were authenticity and truth, which were intimately connected in the data. The finding that the two populist parties equate them with each other would not have come about through a less inductive method. The surprising reconceptualisation of truth revealed how two such different populist parties reconstituted the epistemological foundations for representative democracy. It starts to explain the shocking result of the EU referendum in the UK and the polarising effects on the electorate where the two halves appear to look at each other with incredulity and say, "how can you believe such obvious lies?" It also highlights the role that populism may play in democratic transitions halted by deadlock and corruption, and the contingency that results from both the existing situation and the populist intervention.

The use of sensitising concepts

Despite prioritising an inductive approach, the nature of populist communication calls for a certain amount of preceding conceptualisation, which informed my approach to coding and analysis. I noted previously that my data contained few direct mentions of the people. An exclusively inductive thematic analysis would have entirely missed the constitutive nature of the performance of populist ideology had I not been on the look-out for this. In this case, proceeding on the basis of theoretical reflections on the nature of the relationship between ideology, performance and context in relation to populism proved essential to capture this fundamental aspect of populist communication.

Multimodal analysis

I also proceeded on the basis of a predetermined notion of the multimodality of performance, which guided me in where to look rather than what to look for. The empirical analysis in this research has demonstrated that the nature of populist communication is highly symbolic and, as such, often occurs through multimodal forms of communication. An entirely text-based approach to populism would miss the essence of how it connects to the people.

All of these methodological characteristics are born out of a communication approach to populism.

11.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this section I summarise the preceding analysis and answer the five research questions that formed the focus of this study. While I start by addressing the main research question, my answer to it develops more depth as I devote myself to each of the subquestions following it.

11.3.1 POPULISM IN COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

A vast number of people in representative democracies around the globe are today not feeling represented. From this arises the term 'the silent majority' to describe those who are unable or unwilling to speak up and those who feel that they are simply not being listened to. I have argued that populism engages with this fault line in

representative democracy. As such it highlights a very real problem. It responds to and voices discontent with current modes of representation that are, for one reason or another, not accountable or responsive to the people. Yet I also posit that the constitutive function of populist communication enhances and constructs the very same grievances that it claims to merely channel. In addressing the main research question – **how can populism be understood and explained from a communication perspective?** – I take these two dimensions of populist communication as my starting point: **its socially constructed nature and its constitutive function**. These dimensions explain how populism comes across as coherent, legitimate and even democratically necessary to a sizeable audience, and they help us understand the implications of populist communication for representative democracy.

I have approached populist communication through the lenses of three interrelated and partially overlapping theoretical concepts: ideology, performance and mediation. In relation to ideology, I agree with extant literature that the content of populist ideology is relational. However, I go one step further and establish a connection between populist ideology and its mode of representation. I posit that populist ideology dictates the nature of relations between the populist representative, the people and the elite and that it establishes these communicatively. As a mass ideology, populism moreover insists that the people be the focal point of these relationships. Populist ideology is therefore ultimately *about* democratic communication, what this looks like and ought to look like. However, from a communication perspective on populism I also approach these claims *as* communications in and of themselves. This requires us to interrogate populist ideology through the lens of performance and consider its constructed nature and its constitutive function. By responding to a given set of public grievances, **populism suggests a particular mode of representation through the performance of the relations between people and representatives**. I therefore posit that populist ideology manifests itself in political performance and most emblematically so in disruptive performance.

The ways in which populist ideology and performance interact is founded on a perspective on meaning-making that breaks down the binaries between form and content, ideology and performance, communicative representation and political representation. I have approached this task through the integration of concepts

beyond low-level definitions and through the grounding of integrated communicative processes in in-depth empirical analysis. In contrast to most of the literature on populist communication, and on political communication more broadly, I argue that **populist communication develops its meaning through an interaction between form, content and the context that populism is situated in**. The consolidation of form and content in processes of meaning-making – through practices of representation as well as processes of mediation – corresponds to the integration of populist ideology and performance through communication. The process is the same. **This approach opens up the understanding that populism is a process**. The conception of populism as process in turn enables the comparison of very different types of populism. The problems with political representation vary in different democratic contexts, and these variations result in different forms and contents of populism. Yet their processes of communication enact the relationship between citizens and representatives in similar ways. A communication perspective therefore also enables us to consider the role that populist communication plays in larger socio-political processes and transformations.

This occurs through the process of mediation. The nature of the metamorphosis of ideological content into performative form in populist communication is one that appeals to the demands of the new media environment upon mediated representation. It attracts, channels and directs visibility, performs authenticity and inspires efficacy. It does so by utilising the interrelationship between form and content in mediated processes of meaning-making as well as in the performance of populist ideology. I argue that populists take advantage of the most suitable imaginaries and affordances of a given medium by not only mediating their performances but by performing mediation. Within assemblages of hybrid mediated performances, **the act of mediation assumes a symbolic significance that expresses populist ideology and reinforces and legitimates its mode of representation** in a given context. It is this performance that enables populism's harmonious relationship with processes of mediation.

11.3.2 POPULIST IDEOLOGY IN COMMUNICATIVE TERMS

I have argued that approaching populism from a communication perspective does not preclude a classification of populism as an ideology. Instead I suggest that populist ideology can be conceived in communicative terms through a shift in perspective from

exclusively focusing on the content of populist ideology and the architecture of its core concepts – sovereignty, the people, the elite and the populist representative – to an integration with the form it takes through processes of communication. This shift in perspective involves consideration of how populist ideological content interacts with the world around it through its form. In answering the second research question – **How is populist ideology constructed through communicative processes?** – I therefore depart from mainstream scholarship on populism and approach the concept of **ideology as a process rather than as a structure**, focusing on its social construction and on its constitutive properties.

When I explored the many differences between UKIP and the EFF, it became clear that conceiving of populism simply as a political value system makes its definition nigh-impossible. Each case is a separate model of populism. It is shaped by its given host ideology and specific local context to the extent that its core ideas are so variable as to not have much in common at all. This demonstrates that populism needs unpacking and that our common minimal definitions of populism do not reflect the diversity of its empirical manifestations on the ground. My approach to this issue has been to conceptualise populism as **a mass ideology that bases its content on public perceptions of the core concepts of its ideology**: a given instance of populism decontests sovereignty according to common myths and socially shared beliefs in a given democratic context; it defines the people according to prevalent cultural and socio-political concerns; it blames the elite for the commonly perceived problems in society; and the populist assumes the role of a representative who is able to alleviate ordinary people of their particular grievances.

This explains populism's diversity. It recognises the highly situational character of populist ideology and the central role of communication in how it plays out. In fact, I suggest that **populism's communicative properties form the basis of its content and structure**. This, I contend, solves many of the conceptual problems in the populism literature. It is a process whereby the content of populist ideology is intersubjectively determined through the representative relationship between populist and people; and it claims to be so. Conceiving of populist ideology in communicative terms therefore also explains why it rings so true and is perceived as so authentic by its constituents.

Yet populist ideology is not only socially constructed on the basis of constituents' existing concerns, grievances and beliefs; it also constitutes them. This is also a communicative process, for language constitutes the world and effects consequences upon it. The particular nature of populism's relational structure – such as its opposition between the people and the elite and equation of the populist with the people – results in a constitutive function that reflects public perceptions back upon constituents as polarised, homogenous totalities. In populism, this polarisation is taken to the extreme and given moral properties. This construction takes the form of an **essentialist ideological cleavage** that cuts across left and right in the political spectrum and that is shared by different types of populism. While conceiving of populist ideology in communicative terms highlights its grounding in people's real concerns, it also calls attention to its polarising and homogenising effects.

11.3.3 DISRUPTIVE PERFORMANCE AND POPULIST REPRESENTATION

I have conceived of the ways in which these effects come about as performance. Disruptive performance more specifically has emerged as a multi-faceted concept that is both theoretically and analytically useful in the study of populist communication (although it is only one of many possible manifestations of populism). I now address the question, **how does disruptive performance communicatively manifest a populist mode of representation?** The work of representation that populist disruption undertakes involves both a challenge to, and a reconstitution of, existing democratic norms and conditions. It undertakes this work through the construction of new meaning in a way that is reassuringly grounded in existing myths and popular conceptions of democracy. It is in this tension between the old and the new – between the socially constructed and the constitutive dimensions of populist communication – that the social and political implications of populist ideology come to life. I posit that **the essentialist binary structures and chains of equivalence within populist ideology manifest themselves most explicitly, effectively and engagingly in disruptive performances by populists embodying the people**. The analytical and theoretical concept of disruptive performance deepens our understanding of the communicative properties of populism, its adaptation to different contexts, and the consequences it has for the practice and understanding of politics.

The preceding empirical investigation has provided the basis for a **typology of populist disruptive performance**. The forms and functions it encompasses are not exclusive to populist actors but are a particularly evocative and paradigmatic expression of populist ideology. While the categories in the typology are not mutually exclusive, the typology aims at descriptive comprehensiveness to clarify and do justice to the diversity of the forms and functions of disruptive performance in the communication of populist ideology in institutional settings.

Forms of populist disruptive performance[41]:

1) *Breach of conventions of political speech:* forms of speech that breach the norms of formal political language both in terms of style – such as the use of slang, swearing, dialect, informal enunciation, a high key (for instance, when shouting), eschewing the designated official language (such as English in the South African parliament) – and content – such as offensive and disrespectful language, hate speech, sarcasm, overly direct accusations, blame attribution and not taking responsibility for own actions, gloating, the use of anecdotes and personal experiences as evidence.

2) *Breach of conventions of appearance in institutional contexts:* types of dress, make-up and hair styles not typically associated with formal institutional environments.

3) *Breach of conventions of accepted political behaviour:* non-adherence to, or outright obstruction of, established patterns of institutional performance such as standard procedures, norms and rituals; disruption of the performances of other political actors as individuals or as a group; disregarding hierarchy and overstepping the boundaries of one's role; using body language that is overtly expressive; expressing strong emotion.

Ideological functions of populist disruptive performance:

1) *Expose elite behaviour:* through contrasting speech, appearance and behaviour, portray elite performance as false, inauthentic, illegitimate and not in the people's interests and thereby undermine their representation of reality;

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[41] These overlap somewhat with Moffitt's notion of "bad manners" (Moffitt, 2016, p. 44).

performatively provoke reactions from the elite that legitimise populist ideology and disruptive performance.

2) *Identify with the people and self-represent as a political outsider:* speak, appear and behave in an ordinary manner that contrasts with the speech, appearance and behaviour of formal institutionalised politics.

3) *Establish Manichaean relationship between the people and the elite:* antagonise the elite and, by virtue of identification with the people and a claim to speak on their behalf and in their interest, portray them in dichotomous terms with the elite.

4) *Constitute the people, the elite and the populists themselves:* through identification and antagonistic contrast portray the values, behaviour and morality of the people, the elite and the populist actors; while identifying with the people also portray own identity as extraordinary in its ability to lead disruptive action.

5) *Portray populists as truth-tellers:* through exposure of elite performance as deceptive, represent the populist disrupter as objective, principled and the only voice of truth in politics.

6) *Simultaneously address two different audiences: media and constituency:* attract media attention through spectacle and the unexpected and demonstrate ability to speak for constituents; catch the attention and interest of disaffected publics.

As I have argued throughout this study, meaning is created through the interaction between form and content. The above *forms* of disruptive performance embody key populist ideas and simultaneously shape the meaning of the projected performance. The forms of disruptive performance are relative to the norms and conventions of a given institutional and cultural context. They are also relative to a given mode of mediation where the affordances, institutional values, norms, practices and imaginaries of a given medium or platform dictate acceptable behaviour. While this explains many of the differences between the two populist parties I have studied, it is also remarkable that such different instances of populism perform disruption in ways that practically echo across the continents: both UKIP and the EFF engage in the symbolic action of refusing to stand or standing with turned backs at an institutional

ceremony; both describe the ceremony as "nonsense"; and both use the term "hollow" as their chief means of describing the inauthentic performances of elites.

While the *forms* of disruptive performance manifest, shape and create meaning through symbolic expression, the *functions* cover the relational and constitutive qualities of populist ideology. Through these functions **disruptive performances project a populist mode of representation through a claim to disintermediation** that aims to make the route between the people and their representatives as direct as possible. They achieve this by identifying with the people through symbolic embodiment, for if populists are not *standing in for* the people but *are* the people, the people's path to power is as direct as can be. Self-representation as truth tellers is a second form of disintermediation as they claim to channel the truth without distortion or mediation. When this truth is mediated through modes of mediation known for their directness, populists then address as many aspects as possible in the communicative process in their claims to disintermediation.

The populist mode of representation ultimately refocuses representative politics on the value of authenticity as the central one in the relationship between people and their representatives. Populists' authentic appearance in contrast to the 'spun' and scripted performances of mainstream politicians makes visible the latter's discrepancy between front- and backstage behaviour (Goffman, 1959). Populists appear able to merge these into one coherent identity through forms of disruptive performance. In doing so, the populist mode of representation oversteps, reinvents and removes the boundary between citizens and their (populist) representatives whilst simultaneously feeding into processes of mediation that desire and reward this combination of authentic and disruptive performance. As such, disruption is a key means of manifesting the communicative processes of populist ideology in a mode of representation that simultaneously garners attention across the media ecology. Through its forms and functions, disruptive performance thereby proves itself a multi-faceted and significant concept that should be made more explicitly involved in future research on populism and populist communication.

11.3.4   POPULIST COMMUNICATION AND THE NEW MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The journey – and sometimes origin – of populist performance within processes of mediation is part of the process of meaning-making of populist communication. I now address the question, **how does populist communication harmonise with the demands on mediated representation in the new media environment?** Both UKIP and the EFF knit together live, virtual and other modes of mediation in nuanced assemblages that are adapted to their given democratic and mediation context. In doing so, they utilise different aspects of various modes of mediation – media technologies, imaginaries and institutional logics – to gain visibility, perform authenticity and inspire efficacy. Disruptive performances, for example, rely on spectacle and conflict to defy gatekeeper intervention in the process of mediation, while tweets establish intimacy, directness and (at least appear to) avoid gatekeepers altogether. Within hybrid assemblages of mediation, differently mediated elements of a performance complement each other in a larger process of meaning-making. Ultimately I suggest that **populists' relationship with the media is characterised by ambiguities enacted through hybrid mediation**.

I have argued that one such ambiguity lies in the dual audience that UKIP's and the EFF's mediated performances target. On the one hand, the parties use modes of mediation that signal a direct connection between themselves and the people to address constituents with claims of disintermediation. They achieve this by employing media affordances for symbolic purposes by associating them with established imaginaries. We can therefore conceive of their approach to **mediation as a means of performing the populist mode of representation**. In other words, mediation becomes a symbolic act. Yet on the other hand, the claim to disintermediation does not go beyond the claim as affordances are chiefly used symbolically. Moreover, these **mediated performances of disintermediation are simultaneously targeting mainstream media for further mediation**. I therefore argue that the claim to disintermediation is partly made to demonstrate populists' representativeness so as to justify further mediation.

This in turn suggests a further ambiguity in populists' relationship to the media. We have seen both UKIP and the EFF critique the current state of political communication and its detrimental effects upon democratic representation. The reasons, they claim, lie in an elite clambering for visibility rather than seeking to improve the

communicative relationship with the people, while the media themselves are partial and prejudiced against populists. Both media and elite impose a false consciousness upon the people, with the result that the public's feelings of efficacy are based on lies. In performing this claim, the populist parties themselves acquire control of their own and the elite's visibility, come across as authentic and inspire efficacy. As visibility, authenticity and efficacy are the very demands placed upon mediated representation by the new media environment (Coleman, 2011), populists thereby smooth the process of mediating their anti-media representative claims.

I posit that **hybrid mediation enables the populist parties to appeal to the media through performances of anti-media populism**. Spectacular disruptive performances speak to the media's news values. Social media is a means of demonstrating constituency uptake and representativeness. While both these forms of performance signal disintermediation and thereby dismiss media interference in their mode of representation, they also speak directly to the requirements of the new media environment. From the media's perspective, the latter provides a social and democratic justification for the former commercial indulgence. Despite the ambiguity of populist mediation, the performance appears consistent; not from the perspective of traditional value systems and a fact-based notion of truth but according to the populist cleavage.

That is because the populist hybrid performance is authentic in its consistency between performances within different modes of mediation. The relative nature of disruptive performance means that live disruption in an institutional environment is not necessarily perceived as such on social media, where affordances and imaginaries rather support such acts of empowerment from below. Populists can therefore use social media to build up, gather public support for, and legitimise emergent (and disruptive) forms of visibility and authenticity. At the same time, most forms of disruption (speech, appearance, behaviour) harmonise with social media communication and thereby take advantage of the norms, practices and imaginaries associated with a given platform or technology. While hybrid mediated performances draw on the affordances and imaginaries of social media, they are therefore also able to retain consistency between online and offline disruptive performances. Populists in particular, I suggest, are able to integrate imaginaries that resonate with their ideology

and use affordances for symbolic purposes in ways consistent with disruptive performance. This allows them to construct **hybrid mediated performances that are inherently consistent, intimate and spontaneous and therefore authentic.**

11.3.5 POPULIST COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXT

I now address the final research question, **how does the comparison across different democratic contexts add to our understanding of populist communication?** In the preceding pages of this conclusion I have chiefly focused on the commonalities between the two case studies. The empirical comparison between very different cases of populism has led to the discovery of shared processes of meaning-making, modes of political representation and approaches to mediation. These similarities in two such different contexts demonstrate that **a communication perspective on populism resolves many of the comparative issues encountered in the literature**. To address the research question I pinpoint the two key processes I have established as central to a communication perspective on populism: populist communication as constructed on the basis of a given context and the constitutive nature of populist communication, which constructs this context anew. It is through these processes that **populism interacts with its context in a mutually constitutive relationship**.

I have argued that these processes of representation are communicative as well as aesthetic-political. Moreover, I suggest that this mutually constitutive process between populist communication and its context lies at the heart of all the political processes of meaning-making that I have enquired into in this study. First, populist ideology is constructed on the basis of mass perceptions of representative politics and in turn constitutes the people on whose perceptions it is based. Second, the political performances through which populist ideology manifests itself respond to and are bounded by conditions of social power and draw on contextual background symbolic resources, yet performatively constitute reality and have effects upon their context. Third, hybrid mediated performances rely on and are shaped by their contexts of materiality, imaginaries and logics and co-construct these in the process of mediation. **I conceive of these processes of social construction and constitution as central to all aspects of meaning-making in populist communication and signify the importance of context in its analysis and conceptualisation**.

The similarity of these processes across two such different contexts as the UK and South Africa suggests that established and transitional democracies are living through parallel processes of socio-political transformation. The comparative perspective on populist communication as process has therefore enabled me to identify the essence of populist claims, practices and their interrelation. We have seen, for instance, that populism as a mass ideology builds on common public perceptions of representation, democracy and sovereignty. It adopts social power as the subject of its symbolic action and thereby turns it into a resource that underscores its democratic legitimacy. It relies heavily on common myths and symbols to naturalise its ideology. And it utilises hybrid processes of mediation symbolically as part of its claim. These characteristics form **populism's constructed dimension**. Its **constitutive dimension** involves the evocation of the people as a homogenous totality that prioritises unity (within the community designated as 'the people') above pluralism. It also undertakes the construction of a context for the interpretation of meaning that establishes an essentialist ideological cleavage and redefines truth.

Yet the differences between the cases are equally important. While both the UK and South Africa are facing issues in their representative democracies that are in many ways comparable, they also face very different challenges in their current modes of representation. These differences are reflected in the claims put forward by the two populist parties and mean that their responses do not play the same role in transitional and established democracies. In some respects, UKIP and the EFF perform the opposite of what they claim: the EFF claim they are not disrupting but are destabilising the government; UKIP claim they are very disruptive but engage in relatively subdued performances where each individual performance does not have any significant structural impact on their institutional environment. This and the many other differences that have emerged in this study suggest that **populism's flexibility and adaptability in responding to its given context and utilising its resources is also an essential characteristic of populism**. These differences, moreover, mean that populism has different implications for the trajectory of representative democracy in different contexts. Because populism is constructed as oppositional to a given dominant form of representative democracy, it assumes an accountability function in contexts of illegitimate uses of social power that it is unable to perform in contexts

where it portrays itself in contrast to more lawful regimes. As a result, in established democracies, its claim to speak for the people is not backed up by such an accountability function. I now turn to address this and other implications of a comparative communication perspective on populism.

11.4 THE IMPLICATIONS OF POPULIST COMMUNICATION FOR DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

Throughout this study I have raised a number of implications of populist communication that I now consider in more detail. While I have mainly been critical of populism in my analysis so far – and to a large extent remain so – I also find it important to raise its favourable aspects and to pinpoint where these are useful and where they transgress into counterproductive effects upon liberal representative democracy. Although I argue that they differ in established and transitional democratic contexts, the positive implications of populist communication correspond roughly to its socially constructed dimension, that is, to populism's basis in and ability to channel existing grievances, public perceptions of democracy and current problems in representative democracy. The negative implications of populist communication approximately correspond to its constitutive dimension, for instance in the form of enhancing such grievances and problems through polarisation and anti-pluralist evocations of the people. In this final section I briefly acknowledge the positive implications but then move on to engage in more depth with one particularly problematic aspect of populist communication that emerged as central in my analysis: populism's reconceptualisation of truth as authenticity.

11.4.1 POPULIST COMMUNICATION AS SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED: SHINING A LIGHT UPON THE PROBLEMS IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Populist parties highlight a number of issues in representative democracy. Some of these cut across transitional and established democracies while others are specific to a given context. Both UKIP and the EFF bring to light how the media and the elite often lose sight of the substance of representation: in their obsession over image and commercial interests, they forget the people they both claim to serve. This critique is concerned with the function of political communication in representative democracy

and the people's consequent lack of voice in processes of political representation. Because the moral dimension has gone out of politics, political representatives engage in "hollow rhetoric" to win votes but do not tell the electorate the truth, give them a basis for making a real choice (because all politicians play the same game of deceit), or hear their views. This critique of political communication in modern representative democracy is highly relevant and ought to be heeded. Today a preoccupation with communication governs policy decisions and leadership choices. Yet these concerns with communication are not with genuinely open listening, dialogic communication or deliberation aimed at improving representative processes but rather with quantitative measures of public opinion and attempts to control visibility and media coverage for the purpose of garnering votes.

On this basis, both of the two populist parties demonstrate that adherence to norms and procedures do not bring about the outcomes in society desired by the electorate. In fact, both UKIP and the EFF found their representative claims on a wish for a more substantive politics, a politics in which representatives have the people's true interests at heart rather than simply going through the motions of the procedures of liberal democracy, like garnering votes and winning elections. The current trend of focusing on democratic procedure creates a vacuum of meaning: it is concerned with formal processes, not meaning. Populists highlight how the current focus on procedure leaves behind a large proportion of the electorate. In doing so, they fill this vacuum with definite meaning, represented as truth, in a world dominated by uncertainty and change. It is in this constitutive function that populism itself becomes more problematic, as I discuss shortly.

The construction of populism as a mass ideology brings to light the views and voices of a large part of the electorate that feels left out of the representative process. In doing so, it highlights the dysfunctionalities of both liberal democracy and processes of transition to it. This function is characteristic of both the EFF and UKIP and can be seen as a feature of populism that cuts across different types of representative democracy; however, there are important nuances in the implications for the two different contexts. The EFF play an important role in relation to South Africa's transitional democracy. Their function is two-fold: they give voice to citizens who are not feeling

represented by the current mode of representation, and they hold the government to account where other democratic institutions have failed.

First, the EFF represent people's interpretations of the values and practices of democracy as equally important to – or more so than – dominant elite liberal conceptions of democracy based purely on the supply mechanisms of democracy (for example institutional structures and procedures) (see also Whitehead, 2002, on a social constructivist approach to democracy). In doing so, the EFF bring an existing fault line in the transitional democracy of South Africa and its mode of representation into view. Their populist function is to give voice to an otherwise unheard citizen perspective on what democracy ought to look like. While the EFF's mode of representation is illiberal, it is grounded in mass perceptions of democracy and reflects the priorities of many citizens. Moreover, the EFF perform their claim to representation in a way that no other party in South Africa has been able to do; indeed no other opposition parties in South Africa have managed to gain a voice against the ANC's dominance since the end of Apartheid in 1994. The disruptive strategy that effectively gives them a voice is supported by a justification of its legitimacy in the form of their second function: they serve an important accountability function in a transitional democracy that has long been stuck in its path to consolidation. Despite heavy corruption, the ANC's dominance has stalled the transition process. Populist disruptive performance shakes South Africa loose from its moorings in response to citizen priorities.

Like the EFF's, UKIP's claim also brings to light an existing fault line in established representative democracy that has been bubbling under the surface, but it plays out differently in this context. Their performances expose a cultural schism in British society, which is laid bare by the EU referendum. The resultant very visible cleavage in the political spectrum has in turn shaken the institutional structure of the European Union to the core and severed Britain's link to it. This cleavage is not only the populist Us-Them construction of the people versus the elite, although UKIP have also brought this to light. It is also a cleavage that shows who exactly feels left behind by the representative process. UKIP channel the voices of those who have felt silenced and unheard. However, they also give a platform to those elites who feel too restrained by political norms to voice polarising opinions and engage in manipulative campaign

tactics from within the platform of the official Vote Leave campaign. UKIP's function in the democratic process differs from the EFF's in its lack of establishing accountability. Their disruption serves not to ensure accountability under difficult conditions and to hold an authoritarian elite in check but to undermine democratic procedures and promote illiberalism.

The fault line that both UKIP and the EFF bring to light is one whereby elite representation focuses on implementing and formally adhering to the procedures of democracy without involving citizens in conversation in any substantive way. As a result, any tension there may exist between competing conceptions of democracy and interpretations of the role of democratic institutions within a society are ignored. Such tension must be presumed to be a recurrent feature in transitional democracies that are struggling to import a Western normative model of democracy into a context very different from whence it came (Voltmer, 2013). Yet the British EU referendum has demonstrated that the same is the case in established democracies. Different conceptions of democracy within the population at large have kept underlying tensions simmering until they were brought to the surface by UKIP, the Leave.eu campaign and the opportunity to voice them. UKIP's populism, as a mass ideology based on ordinary people's conceptions of democracy, has brought this schism to light; but it has done so by widening it rather than seeking to reconcile its two sides. Populism's function of representing the voice of the unrepresented then simultaneously opens the door for anti-democrats and triggers a rethinking of liberal democracy as it introduces the basic idea of a more bottom-up form of representation. I now turn to consider the more problematic constitutive dimension of populist communication that this predicament points to.

11.4.2   THE CONSTITUTIVE FUNCTION OF POPULIST COMMUNICATION: SHIFTING THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL GROUND OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

The constitutive function of populist ideology intuitively has a manipulative feel to it. By evoking an alternative reality, it lies. However, I have argued that the constitution of (an alternative) reality is a necessary and ubiquitous quality of ideology and of processes of representation in general. Yet I also posit that the nature of *populist* ideology is inherently polarising as it reconstructs established concepts such as

sovereignty, democracy and representation by ascribing them new meaning through the constitution of morally informed and essentialist binaries. This is the ugly side of populism, which constitutes the people as a totality through strategies of blame attribution and othering. While populism can throw into relief the fault lines of representative democracy and inspire rethinking, it also encourages such breaking lines to develop. Populism's suggested solution to the problems in representative democracy that it brings to light is a mode of representation that has disintermediation at its heart. I argue that this is normatively undesirable and potentially damaging to democratic progression from the problems highlighted by populism's social constructivist dimension. Populist performances of disintermediation take three forms, and I will engage with the last of these in most detail:

First, populists' identification with the people through embodiment suggests that the populist representative is not an intermediary who constitutes a problematic barrier to the direct transmission of the people's wishes. While this form of disintermediation symbolises a directness that encourages feelings of efficacy, it is achieved through polarisation and homogenisation of the people. In the EFF's case, this takes the form of constituting the people as a totality that is entirely black and where 'whiteness' – both as skin colour and as a type of behaviour – is denoted immoral. It undermines the national unity that was encapsulated in the vision of the 'rainbow nation' and that ensured internal stability, harmony and post-transition peace in South Africa. In UKIP's case, the constitution of unity through the representation of the people as a totality created a Remain/Leave cleavage that is in fact far from unifying and that clearly demonstrates that the 48 percent of Remain voters do not feel, or desire to be, included in the supposed totality of the people. Rather, it has divided the electorate in half, across existing party lines, and this is likely to have significant consequences for the structure of the British party system and other institutions of representative democracy for many years to come.

Second, as I argued above, populists perform disintermediation by using the process of mediation as a form of symbolic action in hybrid mediated performances. Efficacy, rather than agency, appears to be the populist parties' concern as they employ Twitter's imaginaries in a powerful way but only use its affordances to disguise less dialogic and democratic forms of communication (see Waisbord and Amado, 2017 for

a similar conclusion on Latin American populists' use of Twitter as a tool of control). A key further area of study, which the present research has indicated could be fruitful and urgent, is therefore how populist parties' uses of digitally mediated symbolic action draws on social media imaginaries versus the actual affordances that have inspired them and that enable public agency. This in turn has implications for the effects of populism on democracy in transitional as well as established democracies.

A third and final form of disintermediation I have uncovered in this study grows out of the populist claim that the reality portrayed by the elite is false. As Alexander also argues (2012, p. 286), politicians' statements may look like constatives but, in fact, they serve a performative function of evoking an alternative reality. To populists this is not a necessary function of ideology, as *I* suggest it is, but is immoral and separates the people from the substance of the representative process. Disruptive performance functions as an explosive act of exposure that enables the misguided people to see through the lies of the elite. Populist disruption therefore also represents populists themselves as truth tellers. Their self-representation portrays them as occupying an extraordinary and privileged position where only they can see the truth and impart it unimpaired to the people: populists themselves serve an embodied function of disintermediation. This has been a recurring and strong theme in my empirical analysis, and so I engage with its implications in a final and more substantial argument.

Truth is the relation between utterance and situation. When UKIP and the EFF apply the criterion of truth to elite performances, however, they redefine truth as authenticity. In other words, they evaluate whether elite actors display consistency between belief and performance, rather than consistency between utterance and situation. They are unconcerned with the factuality of elites' performances. Their notion of truth thereby differs from that often normatively discussed in the context of the crisis of public communication (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Van Aelst et al., 2017). It is not a conception of truth that is based on scientific, empirical evidence, objectivity and fact and that forms a basis for citizens' rational deliberation and informed choice amongst political candidates. The hollow rhetoric of the elite is not untrue because it is incorrect but because it is inauthentic. In this reconceptualisation of truth, the two populist parties replace factuality with morality as the central value in authentic performance.

The essentialism inherent in a moral call for authenticity allows no acknowledgement of politicians' need to concern themselves with image, style or differentiated audiences in the modern political communication environment. To populist eyes, all such inconsistencies are signs of what Meyrowitz characterises as "unscrupulous politicians who have no true commitment to their own performances" (1986, p. 279). As a result, in the populist claim the only morally acceptable way for public representatives to meet the challenges of the new media environment is to perform a politics of morality. It is a circular argument that replaces political value systems with morality and authenticity as guiding lines in democratic practice.

The redefinition of truth explains why the elite are on the wrong side of the dividing line between Us and Them. Populists' equation of truth with authenticity therefore constitutes an epistemological shift in representative democracy, both in terms of the basis of the relationship between the people and those who represent them and of the foundation for citizens' democratic choice of representatives. It changes what we need to know to participate democratically as appropriately informed citizens: honesty and character become not only more important than ideologically informed opinion, policy or evidence-based decision making; they become the only things that matter. The relationship between representatives and represented becomes based not on political values, information provision and listening but on trust.

Honesty, character and trust are no doubt lacking in the representative relationship between elites and people in many established as well as transitional democracies around the globe today. Populists do have a point, as I noted above. However, UKIP and the EFF's redefinition of truth involves the representation of opinion as fact, which is the very accusation they levy against the elite. This leaves the populist claim potentially disconnected from factual reality. This form of relativism, argue Van Aelst et al (2017, p. 14),

> ...is problematic insofar as democracies depend on both citizens and political actors relying on factual information to generate empirical beliefs or knowledge that can guide their decision-making. Facts are, as Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996, p. 8, 11) put it, 'the currency of citizenship' that 'prevent debates

from becoming disconnected from the material conditions they attempt to address'.

When populists undermine the objectivity and impartiality of the media and of institutions of democracy, they further aid this epistemological shift. The media's representation of social and political reality is what we rely on as our key source of knowledge about the world. Populists' redefinition of truth then potentially undermines citizens' ability to deliberate and bases the representative relationship entirely on trust, which in turn leaves agency to the representatives.

Moreover, when authenticity is the only moral necessity, as it is in the populist claim, spontaneity and sincerity trump social and political norms and legitimise the breaking of norms through disruptive behaviour. A strong theoretical argument is emerging (Azari and Smith, 2012), supported by empirical indications in the wake of Trump's presidency (Nyhan, 2017), that political norms are essential for a more substantive form of democracy. More problematic aspects of norm breaking can legitimise the "ugly extremes of social exclusivism, such as nationalism, racism, and sexism" (Enli, 2015, p. 11). These indeed often accompany populism. Populists may call for increased substantiveness in democracy, as I noted above. However, their deprioritisation of norms has a potential to lead to reliance only on procedure and institutionalised rules and legal frameworks in practice. This in turn reduces substantiveness, which erodes the populist promise of responsiveness.

What the populist representative claim does, then, is to call for increased substantiveness in the form of morality and authenticity as fundamental dimensions of representative politics. This call comes at the potential expense of evidence-based fact, democratic norms and pluralism. For populists' self-representation as impartial truth-tellers implies a path of anti-pluralism, not only within the public (whom they evoke as a homogenous totality) but also within the party system. Following the logic of the populist argument, if populists represent the truth, there is no need for political competition or opposition. Neither is there a need for political intermediation in the form of democratic institutions that hold a governing populist party to account. The potential erosion of institutional and procedural frameworks in the wake of populists getting into government then explains how it so easily slips into authoritarianism

(Arditi, 2003, p. 20), for substantiveness becomes entirely subjective and relativist in populism's portrayal of opinion as truth.

Yet let us not forget that the populist call for substantiveness is not without foundation. Anti-populism thus also appears to be a reactionary and not a progressive response to populism. Simply meeting antagonism with antagonism neglects to address the social and political fault lines that give rise to populism in the first place and to acknowledge in a substantive way citizens' very valid reasons for voting for populists. One of these reasons indeed appears to reside in feelings of inefficacy based on the lack of authentic representation by elite representatives. Factual truth alone is not a sufficient basis for democratic representation and the appropriate response therefore seems to be to look for common ground, to acknowledge the need for the coexistence of both moral and factual truth in the democratic representative relationship. I suggest that one of these two types of truth at the expense of the other poses a danger to liberal democracy. We need evidence-based information as well as politics that does not shy away from normative and moral questions. This necessitates a consideration of the roles played by democratic listening and genuinely open conversation as ongoing processes of responsiveness and participation beyond elections. In an improved communicative relationship between citizens and representatives (Blumler and Coleman, 2015), listening to those aspects of the populist claim that genuinely reflect unheard voices is also necessary.

11.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As populism disrupts the ritual of democracy, it highlights its communicative fault line. Throughout time and space, populism has served and continues to serve this function in representative democracy. In this thesis I have developed a perspective, grounded firmly in empirical analysis, that conceives of populism as a communicative process. This has produced insights into the conceptual nature of populism and enabled comparative study. A communication perspective recognises populism as an organic animal that evolves in response to the people it claims to represent. It gains and reinforces its own meaning through its enactment. I have demonstrated that the exemplary manifestation of populist ideology in disruptive performance challenges the establishment's mode of representation by channelling and reconstituting the voice of

the silent majority through a process that harmonises with the new media environment.

A communication perspective on populism thereby allows us to acknowledge its construction on the basis of people's grievances and perceptions of politics. But it also brings into relief populism's constitutive function, which has illiberal consequences and ultimately deprives the people of the agency that it promises. For in the populist mode of representation, the populist representative eliminates their competitors, opens the door for erosion of democratic institutions and norms and only notionally places decision-making in the hands of the people. As it breaks down and reinvents the foundations of representative democracy, it dismisses truth at the expense of authenticity in a moral and essentialist call for democratic rethinking.

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