Populism in Scandinavian Immigration Discourse 1970–2016

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This article measures and discusses populism in Scandinavian immigration debate from 1970 to 2016. Using descriptive statistical analysis and logistical regression analysis, we analyze items related to immigration in six newspapers from the three countries over four constructed weeks for each of the 47 years under study, in total 4,329 coded newspaper articles. We find that populism spikes when immigration spikes due to international developments/crises. References to "the people," anti-elitism, exclusionist rhetoric, but also alarmist rhetoric about a state of emergency, are the most frequently appearing attributes. Second, country, newspaper genre, and party type of quoted politicians are clearly correlated with populism. Populism is much more likely to be found in Denmark, opinion genres, paticularly letters to the editor, when populist radical-right parties are either speaking or spoken about in the press, and in articles with threat frames.

Keywords: populism, immigration discourse, media coverage, Scandinavia, news press

The increase in labor migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Scandinavia since the 1970s has put immigration squarely on the public agenda in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. All three countries placed restrictions on labor immigration in the 1970s,[1] but allowed family reunification immigration and the arrivals of migrants fleeing war or persecution from Chile, Vietnam, Iran, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Somalia, and most recently, Syria. The 2004 eastward expansion of the EU precipitated an influx of labor migrants from Poland and the Baltic states (Bale, Green-Pedersen, Krouwel, Luther, & Sitter, 2010; Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012; Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Hovden & Mjelde, 2019; Pettersen & Østbye, 2013; Widfeldt, 2015). Press coverage of immigration has increased over the same period, and the debate has become increasingly politicized (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019). Populist radical-right parties focusing on immigration have also surged in all three countries (Andersen & Bjørklund, 2000; Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2011; Ivarsflaten, 2007; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Widfeldt, 2018). Populism has even become mainstream in Western politics, according to Mudde (2004),[2] and the marketization and tabloidization of the media (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999) have been conducive to populist discourse in general (Esser, Stępińska, &

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[1] Sweden, 1972; Denmark, 1973; Norway, 1974.

[2] Rooduijn, de Lange, and van der Brug (2014) do not find support for this claim.

Hopmann, 2017; Manucci, 2017; Mazzoleni, 2008). This suggests that the public debate on immigration in the Scandinavian press that has taken shape since 1970 has become increasingly populist. Using new, systematic, comparative, and longitudinal quantitative data on Scandinavian press coverage of immigration from the SCANPUB data set, we therefore measure and discuss populism in the Scandinavian immigration debate from 1970 to 2016. The data consist of all items related to immigration debate in six newspapers from the three countries over four constructed weeks for each of the 47 years under study, in total, 4,329 coded newspaper articles covering 5,640 newspaper days. The Scandinavian cases are relevant to study because they are similar to a number of Western European countries in at least two key respects that are central to the subject matter. First, although there are notable differences (Nord, 2008), they all belong to what Hallin and Mancini (2004) label the "democratic-corporatist model" of media systems, along with Finland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Its key features are high newspaper circulation, a (now) politically neutral commercial press, strong public service broadcasting institutions with substantial autonomy, strong media/journalistic professionalization, and institutionalized self-regulation, but also strong state intervention, with protection of press freedom (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Second, Norway and Denmark, and more recently Sweden, have long had two (three) of the electorally most successful populist radical-right parties in Western Europe. Appeals on the immigration issue is key to such parties' electoral appeal (Ivarsflaten, 2007). Thus, our findings suggest the extent to which immigration discourse in Western European press is likely to be characterized by populism. Populism cannot be neatly delimited, however; some scholars consider it an ideology, others consider it a style of political communication, and yet another group of scholars treat it as a mode of political mobilization (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007; Mudde, 2004; Zaslove, 2008). There are both differences and overlaps between these, and the ideational and discursive approaches are especially similar. Given the size of our corpus, the articles likely feature statements and discussions that correspond with each understanding of populism; some statements and discussions might qualify as examples of populist ideology and populist communication, but not populist strategy, and vice versa. Moreover, it will often not be possible to tell whether a given statement is consistent with one or the other understanding of populism, due to limited contextual information in the news articles. Our analytical approach had to accommodate these possibilities. Accordingly, we have not privileged one approach over the other to avoid misrepresenting the data, but instead included attributes from all three in our measurement of populism in the data without categorizing them. Specifically, we have searched for references to the people, anti-elitism, exclusionism, perceptions of a state of emergency, calls for or celebrations of a strong leader, conspiracy theories, and calls for a referendum in relation to immigration, and treated each of these as an indicator of populism. We also use descriptive statistical analysis and logistical regression analysis to look for correlations between populism and selected variables that could be related to the patterns in the material. The purpose of this probe is to suggest some determinants of populism in press debate, and we stress that a complete explanatory analysis must be the subject of future studies. Overall, we find that the majority of articles is free of populism, irrespective of country, but that populism spikes when immigration spikes due to international developments/crises. This is mainly due to more populism in Denmark. References to "the people," anti-elitism, exclusionist rhetoric, but also alarmist rhetoric about a state of emergency, are the most frequently appearing attributes. Second, country, genre, and party type are clearly correlated with populism. Populism is much more likely to be found in Denmark, in opinion genres, particularly letters to the editor, and when populist radical-right parties are either speaking or spoken about in the press. Moreover, it is much more likely in articles with threat frames. We thus find an increase in populism, although it has been modest and uneven, and reflects the

finding that populist radical-right politicians in Denmark speaking about immigration, framing the subject very negatively with others reacting, appears to make Danish immigration discourse in the press markedly more populist than the Norwegian and Swedish discourse. This begs the critical question of to what extent populism in immigration discourse results from more fundamental developments within political and media discourse, to which we return in the conclusion.

Delimiting Populism

Populism is a famously contested concept that has been studied by scholars from different academic disciplines, through numerous theoretical lenses, and with different methods (Aalberg, Esser, Reinemann, Strömbäck, & De Vreese 2017; Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008; Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013; Ionescu & Gellner, 1969; Kaltwasser, Taggart, Espejo, & Ostiguy, 2017; Laclau, 2005; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2012). A conceptual distinction between populism "as an ideology, as a discursive style, and a form of political mobilization" (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, p. 5; see also Moffitt & Tormey, 2013; Zaslove, 2008) can be drawn, and the theoretical and methodological differences between the approaches are evident in their definitions and the units of analysis and methods they require (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, p. 17). For instance, the ideological approach emphasizes "a set of interrelated ideas about the nature of politics and society," whereas the populist style is "a way of making claims about politics" (p. 17).

Definitions of populist ideology and style emphasize the antagonistic relationship between the monolithic "people" and elites. Jagers and Walgrave (2007), who consider populism a political communication style, argue that "three elements"—"appealing to the people," "anti-elite feelings," and "homogeneity/exclusion" (pp. 321–325)—define populism across time and space. In Mudde's (2004) widely cited definition of populism, it is "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people" (p. 543). Borrowing from Freeden (1998), he emphasizes that it is a so-called thin-centered ideology because it is highly limited in terms of the ideational dimensions and empirical phenomena it encompasses (see also Stanley, 2008). It is thus compatible with other "full" ideologies, such as socialism or conservatism, which Jupskås, Ivarsflaten, Kalsnes, and Aalberg (2017) call populism's "chameleonic quality" (p. 2). As Canovan (1999) notes, "the people" can have different meanings: the "unified people," "our people," or "ordinary people" (p. 5). Zaslove (2008) argues, however, that, to populists, "the people are non-plural, virtuous, and homogeneous groups that are part of the 'everyday' and the 'normal' core of the country, or the region in question" (p. 322). Taggart (2000) has similarly introduced the concept of "the heartland," which denotes a place "in which, in the populist imagination, a virtuous and unified population resides" (p. 95). Moreover, populists "regard the will of the majority as normatively good. To populists, this view is a matter of doctrine or instinct. It is not an empirical question or a question to be debated" (Ivarsflaten, 2016, p. 50). "Elites," on the other hand, may refer to political, bureaucratic, media, academic, and economic elites (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007, p. 324). The core of the conflict, then, is that the people have allegedly been abandoned or exploited by self-serving elites that have removed themselves from the people (Ivarsflaten, 2016), as apparent from the elites' "unrepresentative" views and lifestyles. Such conflict tends to intensify in times of political crises (Moffitt & Tormey, 2013; Mudde, 2004; Zaslove, 2008).

Elites are not the only enemy of the people, however. "The other" can be a number of groups inside and outside of the nation and the state (Mudde, 2007, pp. 63–89). In our study, the exclusionary radical-right-wing populism that emerged in Europe in the 1980s is particularly relevant. Opposition to immigration and resentment toward national minorities are at the core of such populism (Betz & Immerfall, 1998; Ivarsflaten, 2007; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995; Minkenberg, 2000; Mudde, 2007; Rydgren, 2007), as immigrants allegedly threaten the ethnonational identity and possibly liberal values, cause unemployment, criminality and other kinds of social insecurity, and abuse the welfare state (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2018, p. 2; Rydgren, 2007, p. 244). Jagers and Walgrave (2007) note that outgroups are "scapegoated and must be fiercely dealt with, if not simply removed from the territory of the people" (p. 324).

Finally, research in the political strategy tradition discusses populism in relation to forms of mobilization and organization (see, e.g., Jansen, 2011). Because populism is about feelings of alienation on the part of the governed vis-à-vis those who govern, populists tend to reject the institutions of representative democracy—"the system of politics" (Taggart, 2002, p. 65). Instead, they favor unmediated decision making through a strong leader with an intuitive sense of popular will that he or she channels into the political system, or, alternatively, plebiscitary democracy (Bjånesøy & Ivarsflaten, 2016; Jupskås, 2012), as "organisation gets in the way of direct link between leaders and followers" (Svåsand, 2002, p. 4). Next, we discuss media-related and partisan-political factors that theoretically could lead to or influence the level of populism in Scandinavian immigration discourse, and how the national context could shape them. We present them one by one for clarity.

Selected Predictors of Populism in Scandinavian Immigration Discourse in the Press

Parties

To the extent that the growth of the immigrant population in Scandinavia since 1970 manifests itself in more populist discourse in the press, such a development should be closely linked to the emergence of populist radical-right parties putting immigration on the public agenda, with other political actors reacting. The Progress parties of Denmark and Norway emerged in the early 1970s as right-wing protest parties of entrepreneurial origins, and quickly added opposition to immigration to their issue profiles (Andersen & Bjørklund, 2000; Bächler & Hopmann, 2017; Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2011; Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Jupskås et al., 2017; Strömbäck, Jungar, & Dahlberg, 2017; Widfeldt, 2018). The Danish party was torn apart by internal strife in the 1990s and supplanted by the splinter Danish People's Party. In Sweden, New Democracy burst onto the political scene in 1991, but failed to institutionalize and was gone by 1994. The Sweden Democrats was founded in 1988 by right-wing extremists, but became more moderate in the 2000s and won parliamentary representation in 2010. With Sweden no longer a deviant case (Rydgren, 2002), the presence of populist radical-right parties that get 15%–20% of the vote is now a central feature of the region's party system (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014). Consequently, we expect populism to be more present in articles in which the populist radical-right parties speak.

Sources

Political parties structure representative democracies by integrating citizens into one national electorate through organizational activities and campaigns, and by placing their representatives in public

office (Strøm, 2000). They have retained this position in part by adapting to the "production logic" of the media (Asp, 1986; Hjarvard, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Importantly, politicians have become dominant in Scandinavian immigration discourse in the press in recent decades, whereas public officials featured more prominently in the 1970s (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019). Consequently, we expect more populism in articles where politicians are sources relative to items featuring other types of sources.

Newspaper Format

"Media populism" has emerged as an important subfield in research on populism (Krämer, 2014; Manucci, 2017; Mazzoleni, 2008; Mazzoleni, Stewart, & Horsfield, 2003), and several studies have looked at populism and the media in Scandinavia. Norwegian studies argue that the largest tabloid newspapers and commercial broadcaster TV2 have engaged in populism (Eide, 1995; Waldahl, Andersen, & Rønning, 1993). Strömbäck, Jungar, and Dahlberg (2017) find that Swedish studies deal mostly with the Swedish media's coverage of the Sweden Democrats (see Bevelander & Hellström, 2011). Danish media appear to engage in the same form of populism as the Norwegian; Bächler and Hopmann (2017) cite studies showing that Danish media "tend to describe the relationship between citizens and politicians as tense, with the ordinary citizens being victims and the far-from-reality politicians being unreliable" (p. 6; see, e.g., Hjarvard, 1999). Finally, Herkman (2017) finds some positive coverage of populism in Nordic popular newspapers/tabloid media.

Esser et al. (2017, pp. 3–6) usefully distinguish among three approaches to the study of media populism: populism by the media, through the media, and populist citizen journalism. "Populism by the media" refers to the media themselves using populist discourse, as when they express an anti-establishment/anti-elite attitude and/or speak for "the people" against the powerful. For instance, Mudde (2007) notes that "sections of the media, particularly tabloids and commercial television, discuss issues and use discourses very similar to those of the populist radical right" (p. 249). "Populism through the media" means that there exists an affinity between media production logic and the populist style of communication, in which the former naturally accommodates the latter. Simplification, personalization, and confrontation are communicative tactics both the media and populists use (see also Strömbäck et al., 2017). Taking into account the histories of the populist parties in Scandinavia, populism in this sense should historically be more discernible in Norwegian and Danish press because the Norwegian and Danish populist parties have made a mark on domestic politics for decades, and because immigration has been more politicized in these two countries, particularly in Denmark (Bale et al., 2010; Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Widfeldt, 2015). This suggests that populist discourse might be more prevalent in tabloid newspapers and in Danish press.

Genre

"Populist citizen journalism" is the media practice of providing ordinary citizens with a platform through which they espouse populist views by enabling reader commentary on online news items, taking on-air calls from viewers, and reading their tweets (Esser et al., 2017). The press accommodates vox populi primarily by printing letters to the editors from readers or quoting them, but regulates what it publishes.

We therefore expect the presence of populism to vary by genre. Specifically, we expect letters to the editor to contain more populism than the other broad genres we investigate (e.g., news articles, columns).

Framing

Populism is also likely to correlate with certain types of framing—that is, an article's specific (re)presentation of a political issue—whereby it more or less explicitly encourages the audience to consider some aspects of the issue over others, thus giving "meaning to an unfolding strip of events" (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, p. 143). Existing research has noted the dominance of victim and threat frames in press coverage of immigrants (i.e., frames in which immigrants are portrayed either as victims of humanitarian suffering and persecution, or linked to crime, terrorism, increased social tensions, etc.; Benson, 2013; Hovden & Mjelde, 2019; Hovden, Mjelde, & Gripsrud, 2018). In articles featuring populism, we expect threat frames to be the most frequent, given that radical-right populism is anti-immigrant.

Themes

Hovden and Mjelde (2019) show that themes such as the arrival and return of immigrants, cultural traditions, welfare issues, and crime appear as often in Scandinavian press coverage of immigration today as they did in the 1970s. Other themes, such as work- and civil-rights-related issues have declined over the same period, while cultural issues—for example, family, customs, and religion—have become more prominent. As discussed above, populist radical-right parties address more or less the same issues when they argue that immigrants threaten ethnonational identity and liberal values; cause criminality, unemployment, and other kinds of social insecurity; and abuse the welfare system (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2018; Rydgren, 2007). Accordingly, we expect that articles that address subjects such as crime, the alleged abuse of welfare state services, religious and social customs, and the arrival of refugees have more populism.

Country and Time Period

Previous research on the immigration issue in Scandinavian politics suggests the hypothesis that Danish immigration discourse in the press is more populist than that of Norway and Sweden, and that immigration discourse in the press has become more populist over time in all three countries (again, with national differences). Studies have shown that the immigration issue historically has been more politicized in Denmark, due in large part to coalition politics and the strategic incentives of center-right parties to politicize immigration in the 1990s. By contrast, Swedish parties built a cordon sanitaire against New Democracy, and the center-right parties avoided the issue to form a viable coalition alternative before the 2006 election, although the Sweden Democrats' electoral breakthrough ended this consensus (Bale et al., 2010; Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Widfeldt, 2015). The Norwegian immigration debate has occupied a middle position in this respect (Bale et al., 2010)—immigration was on the agenda before the rise of the Progress Party, which got its breakthrough in 1987 by campaigning against immigration (e.g., Andersen & Bjørklund, 2000), and with respect to its immigration discourse in general (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019). We thus expect Danish immigration discourse in the press to be most populist, and that

all three countries have seen an increase in the level of populism over time, paralleling the growth of partisan mobilization over immigration.

Research Design

The data for this article were collected for the quantitative content analysis of the SCANPUB project, which charts and analyzes Scandinavian immigration debate from 1970 to 2016.[3] This database contains a total of 4,329[4] news, feature, and debate items about immigration to (and migration within) Scandinavia and Europe in the broadsheets *Aftenposten* (NO), *Dagens Nyheter* (SE), and *Jyllandsposten* (DK) and the tabloids *VG* (NO), *Aftonbladet* (SE), and *Ekstrabladet* (DK).[5] Articles were deemed to have an immigration dimension if they explicitly or implicitly dealt with post-1960 immigration[6] in relation to topics such as integration, admission policy, media representation, multiculturalism, crime, and labor market and social policies. The database covers 5,640 newspaper weekdays based on constructed week sampling of 24 days each year throughout the 47-year period. The items were coded by trained student assistants from July 2017 to February 2018.

We measured the presence of populism in this material; the assistants identified and coded the elements of populism when they appeared in immigration discourse. The SCANPUB codebook operationalizes populism as references to the people, anti-elitism,[7] exclusionism, perceptions of a state of emergency, calls for or celebrations of a strong leader, conspiracy theories, and calls for a referendum in relation to immigration (SCANPUB, 2017). These indicators were chosen on the basis of a review of the existing conceptual literature on populism. The coders searched for and registered the presence in the items of any or all of these indicators, which the codebook describes as follows[8]:

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[3] https://scanpub.w.uib.no.

[4] We randomly sampled and coded 50% of all items deemed relevant for coding.

[5] The minimal length of news and feature stories selected for coding was 200 words (50 words for letters to the editor), not including heading/subheading.

[6] SCANPUB coder instructions define immigrants as "people coming to live or work (semi-)permanently in the country. This can be refugees, asylum seekers, foreign workers of all kinds, family migrants, and the descendants of immigrants" (p. 4).

[7] Anti-elitism in the 1970s was also associated with calls for participatory democracy. However, we only code anti-elitism in the context of (radical right wing) populism.

[8] Krippendorfs alpha = 0.5. Though significant, this is below common rule-of-thumb guidelines for high intercoder reliability, an agreement of 86% withstanding. Some of this is due to two technical characteristics of the variable (binary coding and an uncommon phenomenon) which is well-known to lead to low scores in the computation of this specific test. For such and other reasons, some have criticized Krippendorf´s Alpha for being too strict and underestimating of substantial reliability in less-than ideal situations (see, e.g., Fretwurst, 2015). On the other hand, the presence of populism in press articles was no doubt challenging for the coders. Controlling all coders' performance for decade, newspaper, and genre (via regression), some coders were shown to be clearly more likely to code articles as populist. Steps were therefore taken to alleviate this bias in the analysis, cf. note 10.

- *Reference to "the people":* Does someone in the text or the author refer to "the people" (directly or indirectly) and identify themselves with them ("talk on their behalf")? The reference can be direct (e.g., "the people," "the citizens," "Swedes," "the community," "the society") or more indirect ("our nation," "our culture, "we" etc.).
- *Anti-elitism:* Does someone in the text or the author criticize political, cultural, economic, legal, or media elites? Critique of individual persons or organizations (e.g., the government, a political party) are not sufficient for an argument to be anti-elitist, it has to be of an elite in general.
- *Exclusionism:* Does someone in the text or the author express negative opinions regarding immigrants as "others" (i.e., persons or groups who are perceived as not belonging to "the people" the authors identify themselves with)?
- *State of emergency: Crisis, breakdown, threat against the society or nation:* Does someone in the text or the author argue that the nation, state, culture, or society either in important parts or in total are under imminent threat, in crisis, close to breakdown, or similar?
- *The need for a strong leader:* Does someone in the text or the author celebrate someone for being a "unique leader for the people," or express the need for such a leader?
- *Conspiracy:* Does someone in the text or the author argue that there exists a deliberate, yet covert/tacit agreement/alliance between social actors to benefit immigrants unfairly in some way?
- *Call for referendum:* Does someone in the text or the author argue that the people should get to decide major issues through a referendum (for example, issues related to immigration)?

"State of emergency" and "conspiracy" are arguably more indicative of right-wing radicalism and extremism (see Jupskås, 2012). They are included in the definition by some authors, as noted above (see Moffitt & Tormey, 2013; Taggart, 2000). Both fit easily with the alarmist and anti-immigrant rhetoric right-wing populists often use, in which immigration is portrayed as an overwhelming challenge to the state and the nation. Given that Donald Trump successfully invoked both ideas in his populist presidential campaign, talk of crisis and a "rigged" system might recently have become more frequent or pronounced in Scandinavian discourse as well. Importantly, populism could come both in the form of individuals/actors making populist statements, or others talking about such viewpoints by both citing/paraphrasing them and arguing against them.

Table 1 shows the percentage amount of populism in the articles by attribute across the countries and decades. The majority of articles is free of populism, irrespective of country and point in time. Populism spikes when immigration spikes because of international developments/crises.

Empirical Analysis

The Presence of Populism

Table 1. Presence of Populism in Scandinavian Newspaper Articles on Immigration 1970–2016, by Country and Year (N = 4,329). Percentages.

	1970–1974			1975–1979			1980–1984			1985–1989			1990–1994			1995–1999			2000–2004			2005–2009			2010–2016		
	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D	N	S	D
Populism (total)	8	7	19	6	2	21	5	10	20	6	4	38	5	9	28	7	14	36	5	4	18	9	8	33	11	10	35
Ref. to the People	4	1	7	4	1	18	0	0	0	0	1	18	2	2	11	1	3	19	0	2	7	5	1	10	2	2	13
Anti-elitism	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	4	7	2	0	8	1	1	6	2	5	12	2	1	4	3	3	7	2	3	10
Exclusionism	8	6	7	2	0	18	4	5	11	0	3	23	1	3	18	3	8	18	2	2	12	1	2	20	5	5	18
State of emergency	0	0	7	1	0	4	0	0	4	0	0	10	0	6	6	2	2	7	1	0	3	1	1	9	4	2	13
Strong leader	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Conspiracy	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	2	2	1	1	3	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	0	1
Referendum	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	2	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
N	49	101	27	81	81	28	74	114	46	112	158	128	110	175	237	132	187	236	205	211	208	221	183	223	350	369	283

Figure 1 shows a modest increase in populism in the 1980s, when Scandinavia began to take in refugees, and it continues into the 1990s, when the Balkan wars led to a new influx of refugees. A second spike in the late 2000s is likely related to new refugee streams triggered by wars and unrest in the Middle East, as well as new labor migration from the Baltics and Poland. Importantly, the Danish press features more populism than the Norwegian and Swedish press, especially in the late 1980s and 1990s, and after 2010.

Second, references to the people, anti-elitism, and exclusionism appear most frequently in the articles in all three countries. However, "state of emergency" is also more frequent than the remaining attributes, and most so in Denmark, a finding that is consistent with the generally widespread use of threat frames in immigration discourse, particularly in Denmark (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019). The absence of references to a strong leader might reflect properties of their political systems. Unlike, for instance, the United States, all three countries are parliamentary democracies with strong parties and comparatively less focus on individual politicians. Furthermore, conspiracy theories are usually advanced by fringe actors who are seldom quoted in the mainstream media. Notably, six referendums have been held in Norway, the last in 1994; six in Sweden, most recently in 2003; and 21 in Denmark, the last of which was held in 2015. Moreover, calls for referendums are typical of populist radical-right party rhetoric. One might therefore have expected more calls for referendums in the material.
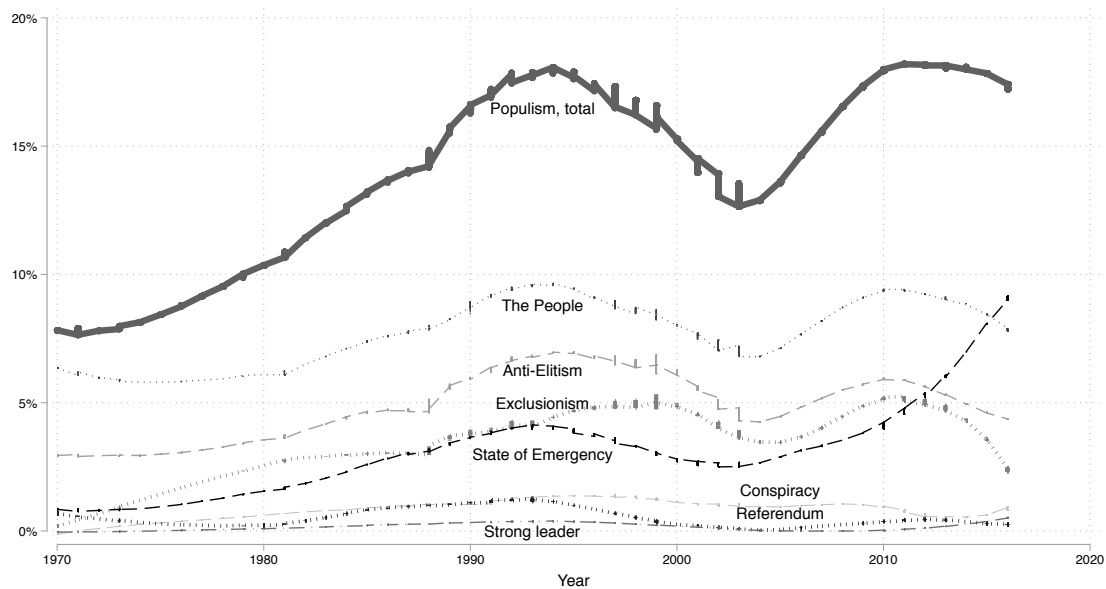

Figure 1. Presence of populism in Scandinavian newspaper articles on the immigration issue 1970–2016 (N = 4,329). Locally weighted regression line (α = .4).

Selected Predictors of Populism

***Table 2. Selected Predictors of the Presence of Various Forms of Populism in Scandinavian
Newspaper Articles on Immigration 1970–2016. Logistic Regression.***

	Model 1: Reference to "the people"		Model 2: Anti-elitism		Model 3: Exclusionism		Model 4: Populism (Total)	
	OR	*SE*	OR	*SE*	OR	*SE*	OR	*SE*
Year								
†1970s	1	(.)	1	(.)	1	(.)	1	(.)
1980s	0.6	(0.6)	1.5	(1.3)	1.1	(0.6)	1.2	(0.5)
1990s	2.4	(2.0)	2.4	(1.9)	1.6	(0.8)	2.4*	(1.0)
2000s	1.2	(1.0)	1.9	(1.5)	0.7	(0.4)	1.3	(0.6)
2010s	1.6	(1.4)	2.1	(1.7)	1.6	(0.8)	2.1*	(0.8)
Country								
†Sweden	1	(.)	1	(.)	1	(.)	1	(.)
Norway	7.5*	(6.6)	1.8	(1.8)	1.9	(1.2)	1.9	(1.0)
Denmark	43.9***	(38.1)	4.3***	(1.8)	7.7***	(4.7)	8.5***	(4.4)
Genre								
†News	1	(.)	1	(.)	1	(.)	1	(.)
Editorial	4.0***	(1.4)	4.1***	(1.5)	2.5***	(0.7)	3.1***	(0.7)
Column	9.4***	(3.6)	7.1***	(2.6)	3.2***	(1.1)	4.7***	(1.1)
Op-ed	4.1***	(1.3)	5.8***	(1.8)	3.5***	(0.8)	2.9***	(0.6)
Letter to editor	7.0***	(1.3)	6.0***	(1.3)	5.7***	(0.8)	5.5***	(0.6)
Coder	10.0***	(2.0)	4.3***	(0.7)	5.3***	(0.7)	4.5***	(0.4)
Observations	4,133		4,265		4,319		4,319	
Nagelkerke R^2	0.348		0.210		0.302		0.333	
GOF test (HL)	0.000		0.006		0.253		0.001	
Classification accuracy	95%		96%		92%		88%	

Note. Odds ratios (OR), standard errors (*SE*) in parentheses. Interaction for decade and year, only main effects shown. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. † = reference category. GOF = goodness of fit; HL = Hosmer–Lemeshow.

　　An exhaustive explanation for populism in immigration discourse is beyond the scope of this study. We merely explore plausible connections between populism and variables from the SCANPUB data set that were carefully chosen by an international group of scholars in the SCANPUB project for the purpose of comprehensive description and analysis of immigration discourse in Scandinavia since 1970. After a short reading of the broad historical trends for the presence of populism in the press, we present a logistic

regression model for three core attributes (reference to "the people," anti-elitism, exclusionism), and in total (for all eight indicators) with decade,[9] country, and newspaper genre as predictors[10] (see Table 2).

As the news agenda must be expected to vary with country and year simultaneously, the analysis allows for full interaction between these variables. Newspaper genre, by contrast, is treated as independent of this. Newspaper format was dropped from the model when found not to have any significant effect (more about this later). Following a discussion of these models, we add a series of single predictors to the final model (frames, themes, sources, parties[11]) to assess their effect (see Table 3).

Table 3. The Presence and Effect of Frames, Themes, and Quoted Sources on the Presence of Populism in Scandinavian Newspaper Articles 1970–2016.

	Percentages (%)		Controlled by year, country, and genre	
	of articles containing populism (N = 679)	of all articles (N = 4,329)	Odds ratio	Predicted probabilities (%)
Frame				
Victim	37	52	0.5***	12
Hero	10	17	0.5***	10
Threat	67	33	3.5***	23
None of these	8	18	0.6**	11
Theme				
Social issues	27	17	1.0	16
Work	16	19	0.9	14
Integration	33	30	1.2	16
Family, life and customs	20	13	1.2	17
Attitudes to immigrants	12	9	1.8***	21
Racism	31	23	1.9***	20
Religion	25	13	1.7***	20
National security	13	9	1.5**	19
Crime	29	28	1.3*	17
Economy	21	11	2.0***	22

[9] A model with five-year intervals would have been preferable, but this was not possible because of multicollinearity.

[10] Note that the model also includes a variable adjusting for individual coder bias ("Coder"), for reasons discussed in footnote 8. The articles were randomly distributed to three coders in each country. Each was assigned their rate of deviation (on the populism variable) from the national coder average. Including this adjustment variable in the model changes the odds very little and has no influence on the substantive interpretation of the model, suggesting that the presence of several coders in each country alleviates somewhat this specific form of bias.

[11] The codebook allowed for the registration of multiple frames, themes, sources, and political parties.

	Percentages (%)		Controlled by year, country, and genre	
	of articles containing populism (*N* = 679)	of all articles (*N* = 4,329)	Odds ratio	Predicted probabilities (%)
Political issue	30	17	1.9***	21
Legal immigration	44	41	1.1	16
Illegal immigration	6	6	1.3	17
Multicultural society	14	12	1.6**	19
National identity	15	7	2.0***	22
Arts and culture	6	5	1.2	17
Immigration debate	19	8	2.1***	23
Parallel societies	11	7	2.0***	22
Quoted sources				
Politician, national	16	15	1.5**	18
Politician, local	5	4	1.1	16
Immigrant	7	18	0.5***	10
Nonimmigrant	47	21	2.2***	21
NGO	6	9	0.9	15
Expert	6	5	1.5	19
Quoted party representatives				
Radical right	8	4	3.1***	28
Conservative	2	3	0.7	12
Liberal or center	6	5	1.3	18
Social democratic	6	8	1.2	17
Socialists	1	2	0.5	9
No party quoted	83	82	0.8	15

Note. Odds ratios and predicted probabilities when the variable is added as a predictor to the model in Table 2. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The logistic regression analysis supports the previous discussion of the historical and national differences. First, populism, controlled for newspaper genre and year, is much more likely to be found in Danish newspapers, as past research led us to expect. Compared with Sweden, Danish articles were overall more than eight times as likely to contain populism. References to elites were four times as likely, exclusionism eight times as likely, and references to the people almost 44 times as likely. Norwegian press was overall twice as likely to contain references to populism as the Swedish, placing it in an intermediary position, but clearly closest to Sweden. The analysis also shows that the articles in the 1990s and 2010s are overall more likely to have populist elements, controlled for the relative growth of debate articles on the issue from 22% in the 1970s to 55% in the 2010s (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019).

Genre, as predicted, strongly influences the likelihood that the articles contain populism. Populism is much more likely to be found in the debate genres, in particular in letters to the editor, which are more

than five times as likely to feature populism as news items. This finding is consistent with the concept of populist citizen journalism; exclusionist arguments about immigrants as "others," for example, are particularly associated with the vox populi in the newspapers. Though such sentiments are known to thrive online today, letters to the editor have historically been the leading public venue for sharing populist viewpoints in general. Populism was also more likely in the other opinion genres (editorials, columns, op-eds). Columns are somewhat more likely to contain populism than editorials and op-eds, which seems intuitive. Editorials and op-eds tend to express measured viewpoints, and columns are a more natural fit for forceful, populist rhetoric, and criticism of it. Predicted probabilities for populism in the articles by country, year, and genre are shown in Figure 2.

We do find support for the argument for tabloids as drivers of populism, as articles discussing immigration in tabloids are more likely than broadsheets to have populist elements when controlling for year and country ($p = .17$ vs. $p = .14$). This difference disappears, however, when controlling for genre.[12] This is most likely because tabloids have more items in debate genres (43% vs. 35%), which are more likely to contain populism. Our data thus emphasize that the engagement with populism in the press is not particular to the tabloids,[13] and underlines the central importance of the debate genres for articulating this kind of discourse.

To investigate the effect of themes, frames, sources, and parties on the presence of populism, we conducted a series of analyses where variables were separately added as additional predictors to the regression model for any indicator of populism (see Table 3). This shows that populism is more likely to be present in metadebates on the immigration issue, in debates on attitudes to migrants, racism, debates on parallel societies, national identity, religion, the economy, and, importantly, when immigration is a partisan-political issue. General issues like social welfare, work, integration, and legal immigration appear to be less associated with populism. This shows that populist discourse revolves around the broad types of issues the existing literature relates to opposition to immigration, even if specific subtypes of these (i.e., work, integration) hardly affect the likelihood of populism in the articles.

Unsurprisingly, populism is much more likely in articles with threat frames, but much less likely in articles with victim and hero frames. Definitions of the threat frame in the context of immigration center on those negative consequences populists stress; hero and victim frames are incongruous with radical-right populism, but may be offered by, for instance, left-wing parties to rebut populist arguments.

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[12] For this reason, the variable was excluded from the final regression model.

[13] National politicians are less likely to be quoted in immigrant articles in the tabloids than in broadsheets, controlled for year and country (15% vs. 22%, $p = .00$), but there is no such difference when it comes to politicians from the radical right (4% vs. 5%, $p > .06$), supporting known arguments that tabloids are more accommodating of these parties.
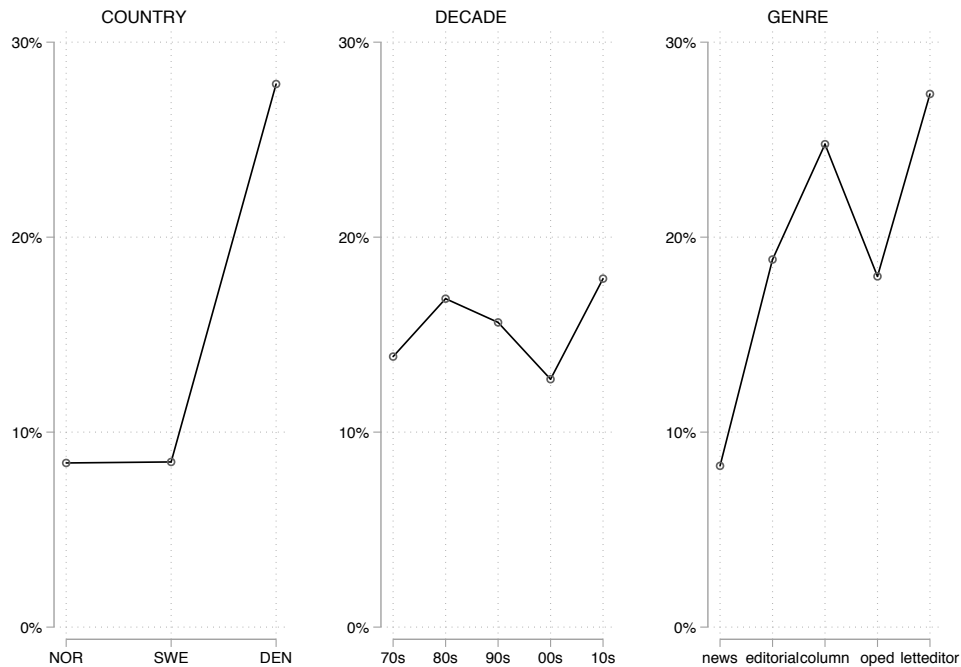
***Figure 2. Predicted probabilities for articles to contain populism, controlled for country,
year, and genre. Margins following logistic regression (see Model 4 in Table 2).***

The importance of national politicians in the debate on populism is also apparent when we look at who speaks in the articles, consistent with our expectation. Populism is more common in articles where national politicians, experts, and "ordinary citizens" are quoted, but less likely if an immigrant is quoted. The association between populism and both experts and ordinary citizens as sources is likely related to the genre differences discussed above; columns are often written by experts, and ordinary citizens write letters to the editor. Experts are also a natural source in news articles. As revealed by the various themes it involves, immigration debate is complex, and the need for expert viewpoints is constant—for example, to assess the veracity of sweeping claims made by populists. That immigrants themselves seldom engage in populism is self-explanatory, although they may be quoted in stories in which other actors make populist statements. Importantly, immigrant voices are generally underrepresented in the media (Wright, 2014).

The comparatively high likelihood of party representatives speaking is related to their increased prominence in immigration debates in general over time (Hovden & Mjelde, 2019). There are, however, big differences between the parties when it comes to populist discourse: An article is three times as likely to contain populism if a populist radical-right party representative is quoted, but there are no similar effects (or the opposite effect) if a representative from another political party is quoted. This clearly indicates that such parties do indeed talk about immigration in a populist way, possibly by, for example, blaming

immigrants for crime, as populism is much rarer when other parties speak about immigration. This finding could be interpreted as an indication of a historical association between populist discourse in Scandinavia in general and the emergence of populist radical-right parties, first in Denmark, and more recently in Sweden, although we do not prove that here. Populist radical-right parties surged in Denmark in the 1970s (the Progress Party) and after 2010 (the Danish People's Party). In spite of the shaky electoral performance of the Progress Party in the subsequent decades, the gradual rise of the Danish People's Party in the mid-1990s appears to have contributed to the relatively stable and comparatively high level of populism in Denmark (see Figure 3). Second, and similarly, a modest increase in populism is evident in Sweden in the 1990s and after 2010, coinciding with the electoral successes of New Democracy in the 1990s and the Sweden Democrats starting in 2010. There is somewhat less fluctuation in populism in Norway. This might be related to the fact that the Norwegian Progress Party has historically been seen as a relatively moderate one (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014; Mudde, 2007). Moreover, its leader, Carl I. Hagen, sought to moderate his party to make it more respectable and prepare it for future government participation, a process he began in the 1990s when the Progress Party began to receive stable double-digit support.
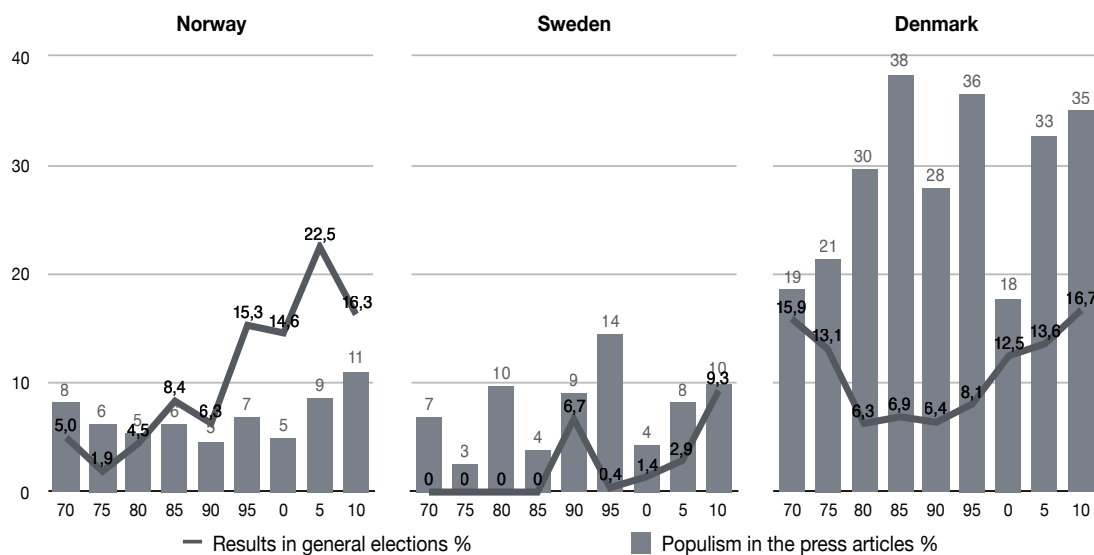

Figure 3. General election results for populist radical-right parties and presence of populism in the Scandinavian press 1970–2016. Percentages (averages for five-year period).

Conclusion

This analysis has yielded important findings. First, we showed that references to "the people," anti-elitism, exclusionist rhetoric, but also alarmist rhetoric about a state of emergency, are the most frequent attributes of populism in Scandinavian press coverage of immigration throughout the period. Second, country, genre, and party type are especially strong predictors of populism, consistent with our theoretically informed expectations. Populism is much more likely to be found in Denmark, and in opinion genres,

particularly letters to the editor, and when populist radical-right parties are either speaking or spoken about in the press. Moreover, populism in immigration debate in the press tends to revolve around the types of issues that populist radical-right parties emphasize in relation to their opposition to immigration. Finally, populism is much more likely in articles with threat frames.

Taken together, the results support recent work on party-centered populism in Scandinavia (Bale et al., 2010; Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup, 2008; Widfeldt, 2015). As Bale et al. (2010, pp. 414–415) notes, the stronger politicization of the immigration issue in Denmark was due to the Progress Party's anti-immigrant appeals, and the Conservatives, and especially the Liberals, also turning to it when the Social Liberals formed a coalition with the Social Democrats in the early 1990s. Furthermore, the Danish People's Party focused almost exclusively on immigration and supported the center-right coalition government, which took office in 2001 and implemented substantial restrictions on immigration (Bale et al., 2010, pp. 414–415). Thus, populist radical-right politicians in Denmark speaking about immigration, and framing them very negatively, with others reacting, appears to be an important part of the explanation for why Danish immigration discourse is more populist than the Norwegian and Swedish discourse.

Still, these findings beg the critical question of to what extent populism in immigration discourse, as discussed here, results from more fundamental developments within political and media discourse. Populism through the media and the mediatization of politics (for overviews, see Esser et al., 2017; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014) have contributed to a more populist public discourse in general. This can be expected to manifest itself in news coverage of immigration as well, but precisely disentangling populism in immigration discourse from populism in media styles and the political discourse writ large is beyond the research design and scope of this study. The selected independent variables will to some degree tap into these broader trends, and although we have shown that populism is present in immigration-related press items, and that, for example, radical-right parties have had an impact, measuring exactly how much of the populism depends on changes in journalism and politics must be investigated in future research, for which our findings represent an empirical point of departure. The same goes for the role played by other parts of the media system (not least television, and for the recent years, social media). It suffices to note here that its relative stability, for example in the 2010–16 period, suggests that the presence of populism is somewhat independent of both surging radical-right parties and the occasional spikes in immigration. A comparision with debates on welfare policies in general would be particularly illuminating, as these debates concern the distribution of goods between different groups (e.g., "the little man vs. the rich and powerful").

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