



Norwegian University
of Life Sciences

Master's Thesis 30 ECTS

International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric

Beyond the 'Bad Guys': Unpacking Populism, Climate Skepticism, and Climate Policy in Right-Wing Party Manifestos

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Declaration,

I, Zadekia Krondorfer, declare that this thesis is a result of my own work. All sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and referenced. This thesis has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Date: 14/05/2023

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Zadekia Krondorfer", is centered within a light gray rectangular box. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Acknowledgments

My deepest appreciation to my supervisors, Dr. Guri Bang and Dr. Håkon Sælen, for their unwavering commitment, patience, and guidance throughout this process. Håkon deserves my utmost gratitude for providing extensive expertise and feedback, which have been invaluable in navigating unforeseen challenges. Guri's constant encouragement and steadfast presence have truly been a blessing, and Team Bang is lucky to have you.

Moreover, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the professors at NMBU who significantly influenced my approach to navigating the complexity of climate and environmental studies. I am also deeply thankful to the professors at American University, particularly Professor Fiorino, Professor Zeitzoff, and Professor Derrick L. Cogburn, whose courses inadvertently contributed to the thematic scope of my research. Special thanks go to Katharine Wheeler and all those who generously dedicated their time and expertise to assist with the editing process.

I am so grateful to the broader circle of friends who have supported me through insightful discussions, words of encouragement, and willingness to share your knowledge and experiences to make this journey more meaningful and filled with joy. The Women's Circle especially. To my partner and sister, and, of course, my parents, without whom none of this would be possible.

Abstract

This study critically examines the relationship between right-wing populism and climate policy, challenging prevailing assumptions and exploring the complexities of this interplay. Through quantitative and qualitative content analysis of political party manifestos, the study investigates the correlation between populist rhetoric, ideological positioning, climate skepticism, and opposition to climate policies among right-wing parties. The assessment of four democracies (United States, Germany, Australia, and Austria) indicates that, contrary to popular belief, right-wing political parties do not consistently employ more populist language than their left-wing counterparts. Moreover, the findings demonstrate a complex relationship between adopting of climate skeptic discourse and opposition to climate policy. While certain right-wing political parties exhibit strong resistance to ambitious climate policies, the research uncovers a nuanced relationship that transcends a simplistic portrayal of “the climate bad guys”.

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Acronyms

CMP	–	Comparative Manifesto Project
MARPOR	–	Manifesto Project Database
RWP	–	Right-Wing Parties
NDC	–	Nationally Determined Contributions
ACCC	–	Anthropogenically Caused Climate Change
FPÖ	–	Austrian Freedom Party
AfD-	–	Alternative of Deutschland
IPCC	–	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
POPPA	–	Populism and Political Party Expert Survey
CHES	–	Comparative Study of Electoral Systems
GPS	–	Global Party Survey
GHG	–	Global Greenhouse Gas
CICERO	–	Center for International Climate Research
EPA	–	Environmental Protection Agency
CCDC	–	Climate Change Denial Countermovement

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1. Introduction

The scientific consensus on anthropogenic climate change is well established, and it is evident that immediate action is necessary. Populism is often viewed as a barrier to democratic learning and effective problem-solving, challenging the bold societal transitions needed to mitigate climate change. Observational evidence suggests that right-wing populist parties, in particular, tend to reject climate change and stand in opposition to climate policies, contradicting scientific evidence and consensus for ambitious climate policies. Consequently, right-wing populist parties are commonly portrayed as obstructing climate policy and considered to be a hindrance to effective climate action. In addition, the last two decades have seen a rise in global right-wing populist parties (Merelli, 2019; Moffitt, 2016), signaling increased opposition and conflict surrounding climate policies. Selk and Kimmerzell (2022) summarize the presumptive phenomenon: right-wing populists are ‘the bad guys’ of climate policy and politics (Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022).

Inspired by the POPCLIM project, led by the Center for International Climate Research (CICERO), this thesis explores the relationship between right-wing populism and the political feasibility of climate policy. Partly influenced by Lockwood (2018) research, right-wing political parties are often characterized as more populist, more likely to engage in climate skepticism, and more inclined to reject climate policies due to the common underpinnings of right-wing ideology and populism. Against this backdrop, this M.Sc. . thesis examines the assumption that right-wing populist parties oppose climate policy through the assessment of the complex interplay between populism, climate skepticism, and climate policies. The study contributes to the scholarly understanding of the relationship between right-wing populism and climate policies by exploring the prevalence of populist rhetoric, climate skepticism, and opposition to environmental and climate policies in right-wing party manifestos across different continental contexts. By deconstructing concepts such as populism, climate skepticism, and climate policies, as well as right–left ideological positioning, this study aims to evaluate right-wing political parties more clearly. The research uncovers that populist rhetoric is as common framing strategy to create a binary ‘us versus them’ narrative and is not necessarily aligned to left–right ideological positioning. Moreover, the study assesses the assumption that right-wing populist parties are likely to adopt climate skeptic language and reject ambitious climate policies. The study provides a nuanced story that goes beyond the portrayal of a one-dimensional issue of the climate ‘bad guys’.

1.1 Established Research Linking Right Wing Populism to Climate Policy

Interest in the link between populism and climate change has burgeoned in the last few years (Huber et al., 2021; Huber et al., 2020; Marquardt & Lederer, 2022). Specifically, research addressing the observational evidence that right-wing populists are more likely to stand in opposition to climate policies and promote climate skeptic rhetoric, has exploded in the last decade (Forchtner, 2019; Jahn, 2021; Kulin et al., 2021; Lachapelle & Kiss, 2019; Lockwood & Lockwood, 2022; Lockwood, 2018; Marquardt & Lederer, 2022). Populism is an ambiguous term that will be unpacked in detail in more Chapter 2 of this thesis, but at its core it represents a type of discourse, ideology, movement, or leader, that simplifies politics into a struggle between the virtuous common people and a corrupt elite, using a binary ‘us versus them’ framing. The rapid academic and political interest between populism and climate policy is twofold: first, the consideration that populism, particularly right-wing populism, is an expanding phenomenon in international politics (Merelli, 2019; Moffitt, 2016); and second, the increasing necessity and pressure to address one of the largest collective action problems in human history: anthropogenically caused climate change (ACC) (Fiorino, 2022b).

Beginning with Mudde’s (2004) proclamation of a ‘populist zeitgeist’, which represents populism as a sort of contagion influencing how parties appeal to voters, research on populism has taken center stage (Mudde, 2004, 2018). The last two decades are theorized to have seen a rise of global right-wing populist parties (Merelli, 2019; Moffitt, 2016), and the dramatic withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement under the democratically elected right-wing populist Trump administration demonstrated a clear emblematic link between right-wing populism and climate policy opposition (Fiorino, 2022b; Lockwood, 2018; Marquardt et al., 2022). Consequently, studies have identified and analyzed a variety of different linkages: from case specific analyses, i.e. United States (Fiorino, 2022b) and Canada (Lachapelle & Kiss, 2019); to ideological commonalities between conservatism and populism (Jylhä & Hellmer, 2020; McCright, Dunlap, et al., 2016); from rhetoric by populist leaders towards the Paris Agreement (Marquardt et al., 2022) to the influence of RWP on energy policies in governments (Ćetković & Hagemann, 2020; Huber et al., 2021; Jahn, 2021).

A patchwork of consistent results emerges from the literature in support of linkages between RWP and opposition to climate policy. Marquardt et. al. (2022) unpacks how the rhetoric from right-wing populist leaders in Brazil, United States, and the Philippines severely affect

climate policies in the long run (Marquardt et al., 2022). Huber et. al. (2021) assesses six European populist parties to find that right-wing populist parties are more at odds with climate policy than left-wing populist parties, who utilize populist rhetoric to support it (Huber et al., 2021). Četković and Hagemann (2020) similarly discuss that right-wing populist parties in six Western European countries negatively affect climate policies when international salience on climate is low and countries do not have strong coalition or proportional representation systems (Četković & Hagemann, 2020). Lockwood et. al. (2022) results showcase how RWPs in OECD countries have had a significant negative impact on climate (not energy) policy and how this effect is mitigated or enhanced through proportional representation or majoritarian electoral systems (Lockwood & Lockwood, 2022).

This snapshot of results suggests clear correlative evidence into RWP opposition to climate change policies. Explanations for the correlations are theorized to include the comparison between the elite-driven and technical nature of climate change policies and populist anti-globalization critiques (Huber et al., 2020); commonalities in doctrine between climate-change skepticism and right-wing ideology (Forchtner, 2019); the funding and mobilization of fossil-fuel interest groups with right-wing political groups, particularly in the US context (Brulle, 2014; Dunlap & Jacques, 2013; Farrell, 2016; McCright, 2016); and the prioritization of domestic economic and nationalist interests over environmental concerns (Gomes & Böhm, 2023; Marquardt et al., 2022). Lockwood's (2018) article summarizes these explanations in an expansive literature review of right-wing populism and climate change to identify three main linkages between right-wing populism and climate change denialism: first, that right-wing populism is often associated with a set of ideological beliefs (such as authoritarian and nationalistic values with anti-elitism) that produces hostility and distrust to climate change as a cosmopolitan elite agenda; second, that climate change is often framed in terms of global responsibility and a need for collective action, which is in conflict with nationalist individualism and free-market economics; third, climate change skepticism is a key part of the political strategy to mobilize and distinguish from the political establishment (Lockwood, 2018).

Despite this literature, not all empirical research supports an inherent link between right-wing populism/ideology and climate change skepticism/ policy opposition. Jahn (2021) discovers that while right-wing populist governments in northern European countries have higher GHG emissions, it is actually the left-wing populist governments in southern Europe that had higher

GHG emissions (Jahn, 2021). The results validate Böhmelt's (2021) findings, which demonstrate how populist leadership across 66 countries decreases environmental performance,¹ regardless of left or right ideological position (Böhmelt, 2021). Oswald et. al. (2021) similarly finds a growing acceptance by right-wing populist parties for pro-environmental policies and stances. Hence, this thesis performs a rigorous empirical test of the hypothesis, applying both quantitative and qualitative research methods to unpack the relationship between RWP and climate policy.

1.2 Research Aim and Questions

Past research has suggested that right-wing ideology and climate-change skepticism are inherently linked, and that right-wing populist parties commonly obstruct climate policy (Gomes & Böhm, 2023; Jylhä & Hellmer, 2020; Lockwood & Lockwood, 2022; Lockwood, 2018). However, recent research indicates a contradictory trend, one where right-wing populist parties are beginning to adapt pro-environmentalist stances (Oswald et al., 2021; Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022; Vihma et al., 2021). This trend challenges the assumption that right wing ideology implies a disposition to oppose climate policy. The purpose of this study's design is two-fold: first, to examine the premise that right-wing political parties are more likely to exhibit elements of populism, climate skepticism, and stand in opposition to climate policies; second, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of populism and climate politics. In this research, right-wing parties are assessed along traditional left and right ideological positioning, the calculation and explanation of which are detailed in the methodology sections. The research questions guiding this thesis are: (RQ1) How prevalent is populist rhetoric in political parties, particularly right-wing, as reflected in their party manifestoes? (RQ2) To what extent do right-wing political party's express climate skepticism and opposition towards climate policies in their party manifestos?

¹ Environmental Performance and Climate Outcomes are problematized in Chapter 2.2

1.3 Thesis Structure

The M.Sc. thesis is organized into six chapters, each of which addresses a specific aspect of the research. Chapter 1 serves as an introduction, outlining the central assumption and research problem as well as situating the research question within the broader context of previous academic literature. Chapter 2 provides a theoretical background to the key concepts that are assessed in this research, namely populism, climate skepticism, and climate policies. This chapter also critiques the various definitions and methodologies used in previous research and establishes a foundation to guide the reader towards the study's assumptions, operational definitions, and methodological decisions. In Chapter 3, the research design, methodological frameworks, and limitations to the analysis are outlined. Chapter 4 presents the thesis' key findings, starting with an explanation of the case selection, followed by the presentation of both quantitative and qualitative results. Chapter 5 delves deeper into the study's findings, including theoretical frameworks and the potential implications of the thesis' conclusions. Finally, Chapter 6 serves as a conclusion to the study, summarizing the previous chapters, reiterating the study's key findings and contributions.

2. Theoretical Background

This chapter explores the theoretical underpinnings in existing literature and research on populism, climate skepticism, and climate policies. The challenge in this research's cross-national framework is to find studies that employ a uniform methodology and singular definition of key concepts to study the complex interplay between the assumption that right-wing political parties assume populist, climate skeptic, and climate policy opposition positions. Therefore, this theoretical background serves as crucial groundwork to operationalize key concepts and provide the foundation for this research.

The chapter begins with a comprehensive examination of diverse definitions utilized by populism scholars, with a subsequent introduction of this thesis' operationalized definition for the quantitative dimension of this study. Section 2.2 explores climate skepticism, including its consequential impact on climate politics. In Section 2.3, the chapter critically evaluates and expands upon climate and environmental policy, highlighting how this conceptualization of climate policy will be relevant for the qualitative analysis conducted in this research. Finally, a succinct introduction to political party behavior culminates in Section 2.4, laying a brief groundwork essential for comprehending the multifaceted factors that contribute to the research findings.

2.1 Populism

Populism is a contentious and poorly defined term with a 'long and somewhat confused history' (Jäger, 2017; Lockwood, 2018), commonly characterized as being 'notoriously vague' (Canovan, 1999). The term has been applied to a range of phenomena, including anti-immigration sentiment, clientelism, and economic mismanagement (Aslanidis, 2016; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Scholars from a variety of disciplines have defined and operationalized the concept as an ideology (Mudde, 2004), a movement (Jaster et al., 2022), a style (Moffitt, 2016), a discourse (Aslanidis, 2016), while yet still others have refused to define it at all (Becker, 2010). Populism is argued to exist as a strictly right-wing phenomenon (Müller, 2017), present only on the left of the political spectrum (Frank, 2020), or both (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). It has been characterized by some scholars as a positive democratic force (Laclau, 2006), a crisis for representative democracy (Mueller, 2019), or generally negatively charged connotation of term due to the lack

of a definition (Mudde, 2004). The notorious difficulty of defining populism has led some scholars to call it ‘close to an academic cliché’ (Bergem, 2022).

Despite, or in light of this ambiguity, a vast cross-disciplinary literature on populism exists in an attempt to define and conceptualize the term. The *Oxford Handbook of Populism* (2017) systematically condenses the literature into four distinct theoretical approaches: political-strategic, socio-cultural, ideational, or economic. According to the *political-strategic approach*, populism is a political strategy used by a personalistic leader who seeks to exercise government power based on ‘direct, unmediated, un-institutionalized’ support from a vast unorganized group of followers (Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Roberts, 2006; Weyland, 2021). The *socio-cultural approach* sees populism as a performative act committed by political actors who flaunt a ‘low’ style of politics intended to build a close rapport with their followers through the assertion of provoking leadership styles (Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Moffitt, 2016; Ostiguy, 2009). According to the *economic conceptualization*, populism is the adoption of popular economic policies, which ultimately hurt the interests of the majority to benefit the few (Acemoglu et al., 2013; Dornbusch & Edwards, 1990; Kaltwasser et al., 2017). Lastly, *the ideational approach* characterizes populism as a thin-centered ideology and discursive style to divide society into two homogenous and antagonistic groups: the pure people and the corrupt elite few (Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Mudde, 2004). Additionally, Kaltwasser and Mudde (2017) are commonly cited for identifying supplementary approaches. They include popular agency approach, which views populism as a positive force that mobilizes people and strengthens a communitarian model of democracy; the Laclau approach, which sees populism as the essence of politics and an emancipatory force; and the folkloric approach, which alludes to amateurish and unprofessional political behavior seeking to capture media attention and popular support (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). While some scholars stick to strict definitions of populism, many combine approaches into their own theoretical frameworks, most commonly in communication and media studies (Ernst et al., 2019).

The multiplicity of definitions has led to both expansive insights from the differing lenses and intense criticism for its inability to identify unifying traits across global variations of populism (Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2018). Partly in response to this criticism, and partly due to operationalization, a growing consensus within the literature points towards the adoption of a *minimalist ideational definition* of populism, with a narrowed focus to defining core features (Aslanidis, 2016; Dai, 2018; Ernst et al., 2019; Hawkins et al., 2019; Moffitt, 2016;

Mudde, 2018; Norris, 2020). The minimalist definition argues for particular core features to be synthesized across political contexts, academic disciplines, and definitions. The undisputed core claim within this conceptualization concerns itself with the appeal of ‘the people’ against a perceived established structure of power (Canovan, 1999).

Within the growing consensus around the minimalist ideational approach, considerable disagreement in the scholarship remains around which core features to include. For example, some scholars focus on people-centrism and anti-elitism as core theoretical components (Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011), while others have focused on people-centrism and anti-establishmentarianism (Jagers & Walgrave, 2007), or emphasized the fundamental moral element in the discourse surrounding the elite against the people (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016). In addition, there is disagreement over the subtle distinct categorizations of the ideational approach (Hawkins et al., 2019; Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Norris, 2020). Hawkins et. al. (2019) describes two distinct approaches in the ideational approach: the ideational approach stemming from Cas Mudde (2004) which defines populism as ‘thin-centered’ ideology often attached to other worldviews, and the discourse approach stemming from Ernesto Laclau (2005), which holds that political identities are created through the discourse practice of pitting the people against the elite. Still others see no delineation necessary between the two variations (Hawkins et al., 2019) or they separate the ideological approach from the ideational approach altogether (Norris, 2020). Within the discursive approach, some scholars utilize a Laclauian normative framework (focus on the role of language, meaning, and communication in shaping social and political processes), others a more positivist framework to political rhetoric (Norris, 2020), political style (Moffitt, 2016), or both (Ernst et al., 2019). Further complicating the subject are the various semantic terminologies used by authors, such as: ‘discourse’ (Hawkins et al., 2019), ‘discursive frame’ (Aslanidis, 2016), ‘populist rhetoric’ (Norris, 2020), or ‘populist messages’ (Reinemann et al., 2016). Nonetheless, most definitions of populist communication are rooted in the ideational approach and share common core features (Gründl, 2020; Hawkins et al., 2019).

Operational Definition

Since much of the empirical work on populism follows the ideational approach (Gründl, 2020), this research too utilizes the ideational definition as defined and updated by Hawkins et al. (2019). The most recent synthesis calls for a definition of three parts: 1) politics as a moral, or Manichean, struggle between good and evil; 2) the portrayal of the people as a homogenous and virtuous community; 3) and the portrayal of the elite as self-serving and corrupt (Hawkins et al., 2019). In other words, populist communication appeals to the good people who share common preferences, wisdom, and worries (*people centrism*) who are in a struggle against the powerful and exploitative elite who patronize the people and deprive them of the right to rule (*anti-elitism*). The tension is thought of to have a Manichean quality to it, which frames the struggle as inherently binary between the good and bad (Gründl, 2020; Hawkins et al., 2019; Stuvland, 2021). The portrayal of the people as a homogeneous entity is argued to threaten the liberal tendencies of democracies through majoritarian rule as it does not enable pluralism (Gründl, 2020; Norris, 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Stuvland, 2021). Moreover, the populist vision appoints the politician as the ‘voice of the people’, in an effort to enact the people’s true will.

This research continues the tradition of considering communicated messages as populist when the three core features of the minimalist ideational definition are represented. Since populist communication is a feature of political messaging, it refocuses the framework away from actor-based approaches (Gründl, 2020; Norris, 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Stuvland, 2021). Therefore, this research is not interested in identifying individual populist leaders. Rather it engages in the concept as whole. This definition best enables a textual analysis of populism as it is focused on ideas (Hawkins et al., 2019). It also allows for both a positivist and discursive approach, which can be applied both quantitatively and qualitatively. As the ideas of the political elites are hard measure outside of speeches and political manifestos, assessing the degree of populist discourse within electoral manifestos meets both a practical, reliable, and consistent way to compare levels of populism across temporal and spatial lines (Dai, 2018; Di Cocco & Monechi, 2022; Hawkins et al., 2019). The ideational definition rests on the assumption that parties’ populism are not necessarily stable and that the level of populist communication can be accessed via a textual analysis of political corpora (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016; Di Cocco & Monechi, 2022; Hawkins et al., 2019). Following Hawkins et al. (2019), this research does not find terminological differences between populist communication, rhetoric, and messages. Instead, the

terminology is used interchangeably to describe the ways in which the minimalist ideational definition of populism is communicated in texts.

2.2 Climate Skepticism

The term ‘skepticism’ is thought to comprise of a multiplicity of definitions, particularly in the context of climate change (Poortinga et al., 2011; Tranter & Booth, 2015). ‘Climate skepticism’ definitions are contingent upon the degree of doubt or acceptance of climate science and can vary depending upon the context (Lejano & Nero, 2020; Tranter & Booth, 2015; Vihma et al., 2021). A subsequent heterogeneity exists in the literature, including those identified as sceptics (Tranter & Booth, 2015). Recent scholarship has made significant changes to the categorizations of climate skepticism, with some creating distinctions between the outright denial of anthropogenically caused climate change (ACCC), usually defined as *climate denialism* or *climate skepticism*, to the varying the degrees of acceptance in severity of ACCC. At the core of these definitions is the notion that skepticism and denialism express doubt over the established truths and reasonableness of statements of facts (Lejano & Nero, 2020). This research too adopts the broad essence of climate skepticism and builds off on recent scholarship in assessing the degree of skepticism to operationalized conceptualizations.

Climate skepticism research has quickly evolved to account for the rise of skeptics across cultural and continental contexts (Lejano & Nero, 2020; Vihma et al., 2021). Research has linked climate skepticism to the rise in new media technologies (Treen et al., 2020), acceptance of conspiracy theories (Uscinski et al., 2017), and political ideologies (McCright, Dunlap, et al., 2016). A prevailing consensus among scholars is that the emergence of climate skepticism stems from the United States context (Brulle, 2020; Lejano & Nero, 2020; McCright, Dunlap, et al., 2016). Climate denialism is often framed as having emerged in opposition to the environmental movements of the 1970s, as a means to maintain the hegemonic narrative that protects the interests of fossil-fuel and corporate industries (Brulle, 2020; Lejano & Nero, 2020). Investigations by scholars and journalists have detailed how fossil fuel industries already began initiating campaigns in the 1960s to downplay the negative consequences of fuel consumption by discrediting climate scientists and establishing aggressive PR campaigns promoting the uncertainty of climate change science (McCright, 2016; Oreskes & Conway, 2010). Also coined the *climate change denial countermovement (CCDC)*, this mobilization included interest groups who helped fund

disinformation, particularly the causal relationship between fossil fuels and global warming, which has helped challenge the previously privileged position of science (Cook, 2019; Farrell, 2019; Farrell et al., 2019; Freudenburg et al., 2008). The movement also merged with other anti-governmental groups, including right-wing political parties, business interests, and religious organizations (Brulle, 2020; Dunlap et al., 2016), to protest the federal protection of natural resources, expansion of environmental regulations like the Clean Water and Clean Air Act, and the establishment of federal environmental protection agencies like the EPA (Brulle, 2020; Fiorino, 2022b).

Brulle (2020) argues that CCDC was intellectually supported by arguments based on traditional right-wing ideologies and supported by conservative groups, such as Manifest Destiny, states' rights, private property rights, and neoliberal economics (Brulle, 2020). The belief in Manifest Destiny during the 19th century justified territorial expansion and the unregulated use of natural resources for economic development that subsequently shaped Western states' resistance to government regulation of public property (Brulle, 2020). Similarly, the neoliberal stance, which perceives democracy as equivalent to 'economic freedom' or 'free enterprise', prioritized property rights, while opposing the notion of public goods and advocating against state interventions, such as climate action. These historical trends contributed to the perception that climate skepticism could be positioned complementarily to, or squarely within, right-wing ideology and values.

Since the early 2010s, research in climate skepticism has burgeoned across Anglophone countries and demonstrated how deep divides over global warming were based on political party identification. This included research and case studies in the UK (Poortinga et al., 2011), United States (Dunlap & Jacques, 2013), and Australia (Fielding et al., 2012), where membership in right political parties significantly increased the chance of expressing skepticism in climate change. Cross-national studies further confirmed the link between the left- right ideological divide and skepticism towards anthropogenically caused climate change and the rejection of climate policies (McCright, Dunlap, et al., 2016; Tranter & Booth, 2015). However, weaker correlations were established in European; for example, a 2013 study found Germany absent of climate skepticism (Engels et al., 2013). Lockwood (2018) emphasized that the absence could be explained through a 'Anglo-Saxon' and 'continental European' categorizations, where climate change denialism or at least skepticism formed the former, and the latter expressed both skepticism and acceptance but never outright denialism characterized the latter.

This background contextualizes and establishes a basis for prior studies linking political ideologies, particularly right-wing positioning, to climate skepticism and denialism. Against this backdrop, this research examines the premise that right-wing political parties are more likely to exhibit climate skeptic language and the extent to which this tendency intersects with opposition to climate policies and populism.

2.3 Climate Policies

The Paris Agreement, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, defines climate change policies as measures taken up by countries to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (UNFCCC, 2015). Specified policies to reduce global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions include implementing renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency, and reducing emissions from transportation, agriculture, and industry (UNFCCC, 2015). This delineation follows a wide agreement within the field of environmental governance to distinguish between environmental and climate policy. Environmental policy is generally characterized as a set of public policies aimed at addressing environmental concerns, whereas climate policy is a subset of those policies focused on mitigating and adapting to climate change (Dunlap & Brulle, 2015; Kraft, 2021; Morin et al., 2020). In both practical and theoretical terms, however, the distinction between environmental and climate policy is difficult to disentangle within broader environmental debates and outcomes, resulting in a patchwork of inconsistent terminologies, controversial understandings of climate policies and politics, and mismatch of research outcomes.

From an earth systems perspective, it has been argued that the distinction between climate policy and broader environmental concern is unnecessary due to the intrinsic interconnectedness of natural ecosystems. The pervasive effects of climate change on all aspects of the environment make it difficult to separate from broader environmental concerns. This is particularly true in the context of complex systems, such as ecosystems, where crossing tipping points have the potential to cascade negative consequences in a series of feedback loops (Biermann, 2014). Similarly, policies and their outcomes do not act in isolation: for example, environmental policies aimed at protecting biodiversity, such as reforestation and restoration, help mitigate climate change as they sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (CBD, 2023). Climate-related policies are also seldom packaged singularly. They often overlap with other national policies relating to the environment, forestry, agriculture, waste management, transport and energy, and are often

designed as policy packages as climate action requires more than one instrument (IPCC, 2007; Rogge & Reichardt, 2016). The argument is that a distinction between climate and environmental policy is becoming increasingly blurred, with some authors suggesting the delineation should be seen as mutually reinforcing, rather than distinct and separate entities (Adelle & Russel, 2013).

Real-world politics, as in politicians and their constituencies, rarely make the distinction between climate change and environmentalism. A recent IMF report conducted on climate-change attitudes found that respondents in 28 countries frequently conflate environmental protection with climate change, with up to 50 percent of respondents in some countries having no opinions on the need to address either through policy (Dabla-Norris et al., 2023). Biermann (2021) suggests this conflation stems from the political framing of climate change as an ‘environmental problem’, relegating the focus to protecting nature and wildlife, rather than recognizing the urgency and interconnectedness of climate change with human well-being and survival (Biermann, 2021). Biermann (2021) also contends that this political framing evolved in tandem with the conceptual and political framework of ‘environmental policy’, crediting Meadowcroft for shedding light as to how the concept of the ‘environment’ developed in the 1970s to become a mainstay of public discourse to envision how the ‘surroundings of people’, such as forests, air, and water, require protection (Biermann, 2021; Meadowcroft & Fiorino, 2017). Climate-change skepticism, particularly in the United States, parallels this chronology as the fossil-fuel industry and other interest groups mobilized in the United States to delegitimize certain forms of scientific knowledge, particularly the causal relationship between fossil fuels and global warming (Brulle, 2014; Dunlap & Jacques, 2013; Farrell, 2016; McCright, 2016). Consequently, the discourses and concepts are conceivably inextricably linked both politically and practically.

Finally, the terminological inconsistencies are found subtly even within the academic literature linking climate policy and populism. Huber (2020) evades the distinction slightly by using both terminologies simultaneously (i.e. ‘climate and environmental policies’ or ‘climate and environmental protection’) in the study to assess the relationship between climate-change skepticism and corresponding opposition for environmental protection policies among individuals who are more or less inclined to support populists (Huber, 2020). Lockwood and Lockwood (2022) assess climate policy using an index of local air pollution to establish a determinant between right-wing populist political party’s influence on climate policy (Lockwood & Lockwood, 2022). However, air pollution as index for climate policy is debated, given that the connection is not

straightforward. Not all air pollutants contribute to climate change, and occasionally some air pollutants even provide positive effects as the particles cool the Earth's surface (Ramanathan & Feng, 2009). While delineations can be useful to organize causal relationships², the distinction between climate policy is challenging to disentangle from broader environmental concerns on theoretical and practical grounds.

Conceptualizing Climate Policies

This thesis adheres to the widely accepted definition of climate-change policies as established in the Paris Agreement, which defines climate change policies as measures taken up by countries to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels (UNFCCC, 2015). Given the broad conceptualization, this study acknowledges the difficulty of distinguishing between climate and environment in both theory and practice, particularly as it relates to the real-world complexities of political party positioning. Therefore, a flexible and accommodating approach is taken, with reference to Oswald et al. (2021) of 'green policies'. The authors organize the climate-change-policy issue as a conflict between the 'green wave' and 'right-wing populism', utilizing a somewhat ambiguous categorization to identify policies aimed at both mitigating the effects of climate change and protecting the environment. Notably, the authors differentiate between anti-climate action and anti-environmentalism at the theoretical level in order to account for instances of positive attitudes towards environmental policy while simultaneously rejecting measures aimed at addressing climate change. This approach bears similarities to the pragmatic approaches adopted by Huber (2020) and Lockwood (2021), wherein distinct terminologies are employed, yet enable and allow for the practical overlaps.

This study refrains from making any normative claims on the effectiveness and distributive effects of one climate policy over another. Rather, it acknowledges the ongoing and robust debate surrounding 'greenness' of various policy options, such as nuclear energy (Ho & Kristiansen, 2019). Nuclear energy is often classified as a necessary component of the clean energy transition, though it has historically been opposed by environmental groups out of concerns related to the waste it produces (Fiorino, 2022a). Another example is carbon pricing, in the form of either a carbon tax or cap-and-trade system, which remains controversial given the potential for

² As Biermann (2021) argues: without delineations, 'environment' becomes meaningless if everything is interconnected.

distributional impacts on low-income and vulnerable communities as well as effectiveness on actual emissions reduction (Kraft, 2021; Morin et al., 2020). Consequently, this research does not take a definitive stance on climate policies. Instead focuses on the identification of policies commonly recognized as environmental or climate-related. By doing so, it navigates the complex and ongoing debate surrounding the effectiveness and suitability of various climate policies.

2.4 An Introduction to Political Party Competition

Several strands of political science literature work towards understanding the complex phenomenon of party competition (Mansergh & Thomson, 2007). The literature addresses fundamental inquiries concerning political party behavior, from examining political parties' responsiveness to the voter base, to the strategies and tactics used in party competition. Scholars have also explored whether parties act as conduits for extremist representation and how interest groups influence the policy preferences of parties (Allern et al., 2021). While this study does not purport to offer an exhaustive analysis of the complexities inherent in political party competition, it serves as a brief introductory exploration into some of the identified motivations driving political parties to adopt specific positions pro- and contra- policy stances.

Democratic theory asserts that democracy promotes government responsiveness to the preferences of the population (Stokes, 1999). According to this perspective, political parties assume the role of intermediaries between citizens and the government, exerting significant influence over governmental actions through the promotion of policies that resonate with the voter base. Policies are therefore strategically designed to attract and retain voters, with competitive tactics deployed to encourage visibility, such as persuasive rhetoric, negative portrayals of opposing parties, or strategic framing. Krause (2020) identifies two such strategies: the first strategy closely aligns with the average voter's political views, drawing upon the Downsian notion of political competition. According to this notion, all parties within a political system are incentivized to appeal to the ideological center to secure broader voter support—an assumption that aligns well with democratic theory. The second strategy identified involves adopting policy positions that contrast from those of competing parties, wherein the emphasis lies in enhancing visibility out of contrast (Krause, 2020). Stokes (1999) emphasizes the concept of 'valence,' wherein parties align themselves with a particular side of an issue in order to clearly convey their stance and use intense messages to signal their position. Parties therefore adopt either 'my' side of

an issue or the 'other' side (Stokes, 1999). This political positioning offers fertile ground for populist rhetoric, as it accentuates a dichotomy wherein the opposing party is portrayed as the 'other'.

The relationship between the policy positions adopted by political parties and the preferences of the voter base merits examination of the extent to which parties genuinely represent their constituents. Scholars often examine the directionality of this relationship by examining the potential influence of party policy positions on the voter base. Meckling and Nahm (2022) contend that political parties not only respond to the preferences of their voter base but actively shape those preferences through strategic issue framing and policy platforms (Meckling & Nahm, 2022). On the other hand, Boasson et al. (2022), observes that political parties in Europe align themselves with either pro- or anti-climate coalitions based on the preferences of their voter base. Parties on the left, such as Social Democrats and Greens, tend to display stronger support for climate policies compared to parties on the right (Boasson et al., 2023). Aklin & Mildemberger (2020) argue that global climate targets and ambitions trigger inherent distributive conflicts on the national level, which consequently increase competition between pro-climate reform and anti-climate reform coalitions that shape the policy decisions made by governments (Aklin & Mildemberger, 2020). Depending upon the directionality of policy positioning, this increase in competition might shape voter preferences or lead to more interest group lobbying. If the logic of policy is to respond and maintain support from key constituencies, then distributive conflicts create sharpened divisions, amplified by ideological struggles and opposing interest groups (Aklin & Mildemberger, 2020).

In summary, the complexities of party competition encompass responsiveness to the voter base, strategic positioning, the influence of interest groups, and the impact of global challenges such as climate change.

3. Material and Methods

This chapter presents the materials and methods utilized in the study, starting with an explanation of the research design. The logic behind adopting a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, is explained by the design of two research questions posed: the first, which explores the prevalence of populist rhetoric in political parties, particularly those of a right-wing inclination, as demonstrated by their party manifestoes; and the second, which investigates the extent to which right-wing political parties express climate skepticism and opposition towards climate policies in their party manifestos. Additionally, this chapter provides an overview of the data sources and case selection criteria that are demonstrated as relevant to the research aim. Lastly, the chapter presents a detailed explanation and outlined process of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including the theories and frameworks that inform them. While the limitations are discussed throughout the sections to explain research decisions, additional limitations are disclosed towards the conclusion of the chapter.

3.1 Mixed Methods Research Design

This research adopts an embedded research design with a sequential data collection to address research questions and aims. The purpose of this design is to examine the premise that right-wing political parties are more likely to stand in opposition to climate policies, adopt populist rhetoric, and express climate skepticism. An embedded design enables a researcher to address subsidiary research questions with both quantitative or qualitative methodologies, either simultaneously or sequentially (Bryman, 2016). The sequential data collection approach is when a primary data analysis informs the purposeful sampling of a secondary phase (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The primary phase of this study thus utilizes a quantitative approach to calculate the extent of left and right political positioning in order to select parties based on their ideological dimensions. The secondary phase assesses right-wing parties to populist rhetoric, climate policies, and climate skepticism using content analysis. Content analysis is an approach used in both the qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Bryman, 2016), and this research makes use of both. This embedded research design enables each of the research questions to be addressed with distinct methodologies, while still drawing upon both approaches to best address the overarching research

aim: the investigation of right-wing political parties and their positions on climate policies, populist rhetoric, and climate skepticism.

In order to answer the first research question, this study first establishes a left – right ideological positioning of political parties across country contexts through a uniform measurement tool. This is important as each of the countries operate within differing political institutions, and cultural and historical contexts. To assess the prevalence of populist rhetoric in right-wing political parties, a quantitative content analysis is used. Quantitative content analysis seeks to identify and count specific elements in textual data, such as the frequency of certain words or the occurrence of specific concepts, to generate numerical data (Bryman, 2016). It often applies deductive and structured approach through the use of pre-existing schemas or systematic descriptions of data (Bryman, 2016). Quantitative text mining is a form of content analysis that utilizes computational methods to parse and assess textual data (Grimmer et al., 2022). The populist dimension is assessed through quantitative text mining content analysis in relation to the ideological positioning of parties across country contexts.

The second research question assesses the extent RWP express climate skepticism and opposition towards climate policies. A qualitative content analysis is used for a sample of selected right-wing political party manifestos. A qualitative content analysis involves a more subjective and exploratory approach, which can take on an iterative process of coding and data exploration (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The iterative process makes use of prior research and existing codebooks, that in combination with an inductive approach, refines existing coding schemas to new research questions and data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the case of this study, the qualitative phase draws upon previous research to adopt and revise pre-existing frameworks to analyze the thematic relationship between climate policy and right-wing populism.

3.2 Data Sources

The research questions and objectives of this thesis necessitated the use of a data source that facilitates cross-country comparability for examining the phenomenon of populism, climate skepticism, and opposition to climate policies. Furthermore, the study employs a combination of quantitative computational text mining and qualitative content analysis, which demanded specific features of the data source, such as public accessibility and consistency in format across countries.

Given constraints in time and expertise, the following section describes the researcher's choices made for the data sources in this research.

3.2.1 Political Manifestos

Content analysis of party manifestos is common at the elite level because of the difficulty of getting politicians to participate in interviews or surveys (Hawkins et al., 2019). Textual content analysis offers reliable measures of populist ideas and communication at the elite level compared to surveys on the mass public level (Hawkins et al., 2019). Researchers have used manifestos in a wide range of studies, including the examination of populist discourse, which allows for easy validation of new measures of populist discourse using existing measures based on manifestos (Rooduijn & Akkerman, 2017; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). Additionally, given their purpose and mostly standardized procedure, manifestos serve as political discourse source that is both comparable and publicly accessible across countries (Dai, 2018).

Political party manifestos are a crucial form of campaign messaging by political parties to outline a party's official platform and policy position (Dai, 2018). Previous literature has demonstrated how political party members spend a considerable amount of time deliberating on the topics and policy positions presented (Adams et al., 2011; Green & Hobolt, 2008). There is also some evidence corroborating the correlation between promised policies in electoral manifestos to the policies implemented by the political parties (Bara, 2005; Naurin, 2014). Further research has shown that parties strategically frame how they present the issues in the manifesto, including specific word choices (Crabtree et al., 2020). As a result, scholars frequently rely on the content of manifestos to analyze political discourse, classify political parties' policy positions, and make predictions on how political parties will act once in power (Dai, 2018; Hawkins et al., 2019).

3.2.2 CMP/MARPOR Database

The Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP/MARPOR) dataset is a free, digital, multilingual, annotated collection of electoral programs (Lehmann et al., 2022). Currently the largest collection of annotated political party manifestos (Lehmann et al., 2022), it is an international and collaborative database where party electoral manifestos are structured in quasi-sentences and coded by national expert teams according to a standard coding scheme. Since 2009, CMP/MARPOR has been supported by the German Research Foundation in the WZB Berlin

Social Science Center (Lehmann et al., 2022). The database was updated in the 2022 version to include 50 countries, with 40 different languages, and close to 3000 digitally annotated manifestos; importantly, only manifestos from political parties that have gained at least one seat in parliament at the focal election are eligible for the CMP database (Lehmann et al., 2022). This requisite omits the study of fringe political parties or minority parties unable to meet that requirement within different political institutions. Original and annotated electoral manifestos are accessible either via download as a pdf file or API keys for software environments. Using the most recent 2022 version with coded handbook V5, this research makes use of both pathways: the quantitative portion imports the electoral manifestos into the RStudio environment using a pre-developed R-package called (manifestoR), and the qualitative research utilizes the original (non-annotated) pdf documents.

3.3 Case Selection

This M.Sc. thesis aligns itself with the POPCLIM research project, which explores the relationship between right-wing populism and the political feasibility of climate policy. POPCLIM investigates the drivers of opposition to climate policy among right-wing populists in four countries: the United States, Australia, Germany, and Norway. These countries were chosen due to their significance to the global energy system, sizeable fossil fuel extractive industries, and political influence in international environmental agreements, particularly the 2015 Paris Agreement (POPCLIM, 2021). The Paris Agreement requires countries to submit increasingly ambitious pledges and expects developed countries to take the lead in this process. As climate policy ambition increases, impact on economic activities related to fossil fuel use is expected to trigger conflicts of interest at the domestic level (Bang, 2021). Hence, the scope of the study is limited to Western democracies to examine the opposition to climate policies among right-wing populist parties in these countries.

3.3.1 Country Case Selection

The thesis shares a common focus with POPCLIM project but examines Austria in the place of Norway. This deviation has practical reasons as the researcher does not speak Norwegian to verify the textual information, restricting the comparison to a German and English selection. Austria still aligns with the case selection criteria of the POPCLIM, as it is a high-income Western

country and a signatory of the Paris Agreement. However, the political landscape of Austria features right-wing political parties known to embrace climate policies, while advocating for far-right ecologicalism (Lubarda, 2020). This deviation provides an opportunity to examine how far-right ideologies, climate policies, and populist communication interact across four different Western countries, making it a valuable case add in the context of this project's objectives.

The comparison of the four Western democracies provides an opportunity to strengthen results on climate policy and political party populism, given their expected variation in political and electoral systems, as well as energy profiles. The United States and Australia are historically major producers and exporters of coal, crude oil, and natural gas (IEA, 2021). Germany has a large coal industry, particularly in lignite coal mining, and is also heavily reliant on imported natural gas (IEA, 2021). While their phasing out of coal and transition to renewable energy is commendable because of broad stakeholder representation in the formal process to target potential losers in the transition (Bang et al., 2022), the continued use of phase-coal has garnered criticism from others. In contrast, Austria stands out as the only country among the four with limited fossil fuel production, primarily relying on renewable energy sources, predominantly hydroelectric power.

Furthermore, despite the shared Western democratic framework, the four countries under study exhibit variations in their political institutions and electoral systems. Specifically, Austria and Germany display the greatest similarities in terms of political institutions and electoral systems, while Australia bears a closer resemblance to the United States. Austria and Germany function as federal parliamentary republics, featuring a President as the head of state and a Chancellor as the head of government (Roider et al., 2023; Schleunes et al., 2023). In the context of federal parliamentary democracies, the formation of the government is contingent upon the majority party or coalition in parliament, necessitating negotiation and compromise among political parties to pass legislation. Moreover, both countries adhere to proportional representation, wherein voters express their preferences for political parties rather than individual candidates, and seats in the legislature are apportioned based on the proportion of votes received by each party (Roider et al., 2023; Schleunes et al., 2023). This proportional representation system facilitates the inclusion of smaller parties, promotes diversity in political representation, and fosters coalition governments by increasing the likelihood of multiple parties attaining seats.

Australia, although also characterized as a federal parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarchy (Rickard et al., 2023), is often likened to a ‘light version’ of the United States’ political landscape. In this context, two major political parties alternate in government, appealing to a broad spectrum of voters and encompassing diverse political views (Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Moffitt, 2016). This phenomenon is attributed to the majoritarian electoral systems in place. Australia employs an alternative voting system known as preferential voting or instant-runoff voting. Under this system, voters rank candidates in order of preference, and if no candidate secures an absolute majority, the lowest-ranking candidate is eliminated, and their votes are redistributed based on subsequent preferences until a candidate secures a majority (Rickard et al., 2023). In contrast, the United States adopts a single-member district plurality system, commonly known as ‘winners take all’ for congressional elections³. In this majoritarian system, the candidate who garners the highest number of votes in a specific district claims the seat, often resulting in a winner-takes-all outcome and presenting challenges for smaller parties in gaining representation.

The differences in political institutions, electoral systems, and energy profiles among these four countries in this study have the potential to enhance the credibility and validity of the research findings. Through the examination of multiple heterogeneous countries, this research can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and nuances surrounding the relationship between right-wing populism and climate policy.

3.3.2 Temporal Scope

The time-frame for this study is partially determined by the POPCLIM research project, which integrates the 2015 Paris Agreement and bases it into the country case selection process (POPCLIM, 2021). This study centers on the period surrounding the Paris Agreement, with a particular focus on the electoral period following the 2015 Paris Agreement. To examine the first research question as a trend assessment of prevalence, this study expands the temporal scope using quantitative text mining to include populist communication and left/right ideological positioning from 2000 to 2020, incorporating 82 manifestos across the four selected countries. The analysis narrows to focus to the electoral cycles following the signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement,

³ Some states and districts experiment with alternative voting systems, but the vast majority adopt the ‘first-past-post’ approach: John, S., Smith, H., & Zack, E. (2018). The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities? *Electoral Studies*, 54, 90-102. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2018.05.009> .

analyzing a total of 21 electoral manifestos from the years 2016 and 2017. The qualitative content analysis is thus conducted on right-wing political parties during the 2016 and 2017 election cycles. Due to time constraints, this study is unable to explicitly explore linkages in more updated political manifestos. However, due to COVID-19 regulations, many political parties chose to recycle old manifestos with short, revised abstractions. Therefore, the findings in this research are still potentially more applicable than anticipated.

3.4 Quantitative Content Analysis

The first research question aims to determine the prevalence of populist rhetoric in political parties manifestoes, particularly those assessed on the right ideological positioning (RQ1: How prevalent is populist rhetoric in political parties, particular right-wing, as reflected in their party manifestoes?). To achieve this goal, a quantitative content analysis approach is employed across the large dataset comprised of 82 electoral manifestos in the four selected countries. Manual coding and analysis of such a large dataset would be time-consuming, costly, and prone to human error (Grimmer et al., 2022). Therefore, big data analytics are employed to allow for a systematic and objective analysis of the data, for a comprehensive understanding of the research aim.

3.4.1 The Case for Computational Text Mining

The emergence of big data analytics revolutionized the collection, storage, and analysis of datasets⁴ (Grimmer et al., 2022). When data becomes too complex and large for traditional research methods, methods such as statistical algorithms, machine learning techniques, and text mining tools present new opportunities for researchers to extract new patterns and relationships. Text mining is a specific type of analysis applied to large volumes of unstructured and structured textual data, that tend to focus on more targeted research questions and involve more iterative processes to address larger volumes of textual data (Grimmer et al., 2022). However, major challenges for big data analytics include algorithmic biases, prejudices, and errors, particularly when low-quality data or analysis extract unreliable results (Benoit, 2020; Grimmer et al., 2022). Similarly, automatic

⁴ Big data analytics refers to computational methods and tools capable of analyzing the ‘three V(s)’ of big data: volume, variety, and velocity of data. The three Vs assess the degree of variability, speed of incoming and existing data, and amount of volume within a particular dataset.

text mining tools often fail to capture context-specific meanings or lack transparency to properly interpret methodology and accuracy of the results (Benoit, 2020; Grimmer et al., 2022).

Nonetheless, computational text mining has exploded in over the past decade, including in political science (Benoit, 2020). The use of big data analytics has enabled political scientists to analyze large volumes of textual data across time, geographies, and languages. These tools are generally thought of as exhibiting a high degree of accuracy and internal reliability, whilst addressing complex political phenomena such as ideological dimensions and populism. This holds particularly true compared to prior analyses which are thought to be more susceptible to issues of subjectivity and interpretability due to their reliance upon individual human coding and analysis (Grimmer et al., 2022). Following the trend of computational analysis, this research uses the automatic textual coding and calculations to determine the extent of populist communication within 82 electoral manifestos and the determines the extent of left/right ideological dimensions according the RILE scale.

3.4.2 Measuring Left – Right Ideological Positioning of Parties

The central objective of this research is to investigate right-wing political parties and their attitudes towards populism, climate skepticism, and opposition to climate policies. This aim is achieved through the use of a uniform measurement tool to determine the ideological positioning of these parties on the left-right political spectrum. The dual purpose of this approach is to both establish a clear framework for selecting political parties and ensure comparability between them, both crucial to answering the research question and facilitating cross-cultural comparisons.

The CMP database offers a right–left (RILE) ideological measurement tool to summarize the major policy stands of electoral manifestos and calculate the overall positioning of parties. It reflects the ‘saliency theory’: a particular theory of political party competition that argues that all parties hold similar positions, yet differentiate themselves by emphasizing certain issues thought to resonate with certain voters (Lowe et al., 2011). The basis of the construction of policy positions is based on early modern political theories, which links Marxist and progressive political analyses as ‘left’, and opposing analyses broadly supporting the existing order defining the ‘right’ side (Budge & McDonald, 2012). In this way, support for the military is categorized as a right-leaning policy preference with opposition as left leaning (see Table 1 for full list of policy positions).

Table 1: The sets of ‘left’ and ‘right’ categories of the RILE index.

Left		Right	
Code	Name	Code	Name
per103	Anti-imperialism: Positive	per104	Military: Positive
per105	Military: Negative	per201	Freedom and Human Rights
per106	Peace: Positive	per203	Constitutionalism: Positive
per107	Internationalism: Positive	per305	Political Authority
per202	Democracy	per401	Free Enterprise
per403	Market Regulation	per402	Economic Incentives
per404	Economic Planning	per407	Protectionism: Negative
per406	Protectionism: Positive	per414	Economic Orthodoxy
per412	Controlled Economy	per505	Welfare State Limitation
per413	Nationalization	per601	National Way of Life: Positive
per504	Welfare State Expansion	per603	Traditional Morality: Positive
per506	Education Expansion	per605	Law and Order
per701	Labour Groups: Positive	per606	Social Harmony

Adapted from: Mölder, M. (2013). The validity of the RILE left–right index as a measure of party policy. *Party Politics*

The rationale behind RILE does not rest on the empirical coherence of its policy categories across the data, but on the political analyses of early modern theorists who evaluated these categories and whose influence still resonates in contemporary politics today⁵ (Budge, 2013; Budge & McDonald, 2012). For this reason, the RILE scale is considered a widely applicable and transparent measurement tool, indicative of an overall summary of policy positions over time (Budge & McDonald, 2012; Flentje et al., 2017; McDonald, 2006; Mikhaylov et al., 2012). The RILE calculation is assessed through the frequency of policy positions on the sentence level within a text⁶ (Lowe et al., 2011). To view the calculation of the RILE scale, see Figure 1.

Figure 1

RILE Calculation

$$\theta^{(s)} = \frac{R - L}{N}$$

Figure 1: Calculation of the left-right ideological positioning. R represents number of ‘right’ policy coded positions L represents number of ‘left’ policy positions, and N represents total number.

Figure adapted from: Lowe, W., Bneoit, K., Mikhaylov, S., & Laver, M. (2011). Scaling Policy Preferences from Coded Political Texts. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 36(1), 123-155.

⁵ The policy positions are then assigned into codes (coded as ‘per’) and combined into a numerical frequency of Left-Right (L-R) coding scale, also known as RILE. The calculation designates 13 policy (‘per’) categories as pre-defined ‘left’ and 13 policy categories as ‘right’, with the remaining 30 policy categories unrelated to the left-right classification.

⁶ This study employs a sentence-level unit of analysis and determined that the RILE scale, which measures the relative balance of left and right sentences at a quasi-sentence level. This is better aligned with the overall structure of this research as both the qualitative and quantitatively content analysis is centered around the sentence as a unit of analysis.

The validity and reliability of the RILE scale are heavily contested⁷ (Bruinsma & Gemenis, 2020; Lowe et al., 2011; Mölder, 2013). The approach of the Manifesto Project is criticized on almost all of its theoretical and methodological choices, from debatable theoretical assumptions, misclassification by trained coders, and inability to compare cross-cultural policy coverages (Bruinsma & Gemenis, 2020; Gemenis, 2013). While alternative scales are promoted and integrated into the CMP database, such as *logit_rile* (Lowe et al., 2011) and Franzmann-Kaiser calculation (Gemenis, 2013), they too have shown issues of scale and validity⁸. This study analyzed the policy-positions using these two alternative scales, however found that within the four country case selections, RILE proved more reliable against other measurements. Considering the lack of a gold standard to evaluate party positions (Bruinsma & Gemenis, 2020), this research retains the use of the RILE scale, and offers to supplement the position against other R-L scales, such as the Global Party Survey research based on expert data (Norris, 2020). Despite the controversy surrounding traditional right/left policy measurements, the RILE scale remains one of the most widely used scales in political science (Däubler & Benoit, 2017). Through an explorative interface of the dataset, this research filters for the specified time-frame, country, and RILE calculation within the CMP/MARPOR dataset. The data is then transferred into Microsoft Excel and graphed for visual representation, found both in Appendix A and in the Chapter 4.

3.4.3 Assessing Populism with an Automated Dictionary-Based Approach

Quantitatively measuring forms of populist communication amounts to determining what a corpus of words, phrases, or ideas count as evidence of populism. Table 2, adopted from Stuvland (2021), depicts the various quantitative text content analysis taken by researchers to code and study populism dependent upon analysis, collection strategy, and typical data source. There are two forms of automated computational text analysis: supervised or unsupervised machine models and dictionary-based approaches. Machine learning models use a sample of hand-coded texts to train an algorithm to search and identify specified parameters (Dai, 2018; Ernst et al., 2019). The

⁷ Coding schemes such as CMP also present a general problem as hierarchically organized categories can either exclude important content or belong only to more than one category: Carter, N., Ladrech, R., Little, C., & Tsagkroni, V. (2018). Political parties and climate policy: A new approach to measuring parties' climate policy preferences. *Party Politics*, 24(6), 731-742. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068817697630> .

⁸ The *logit_rile* scale, for example, is based on the same theoretical foundations of RILE, yet uses a log ratio to calculate the relative balance and proportional changes of left and right policy positions: Lowe, W., Benoit, K., Mikhaylov, S., & Laver, M. (2011). Scaling Policy Preferences from Coded Political Texts. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 36(1), 123-155. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-9162.2010.00006.x>

dictionary approach rests upon researchers determining populist characteristics about texts to develop a word bank associated with populist claims (Aslanidis, 2016; Dai, 2018; Kaltwasser et al., 2017; Pauwels, 2011). This measurement relies upon a computer to count the proportion of words considered to be indicators of populism, meaning that the unit of analysis rests upon the word rather than the paragraph. The first attempt to use an automatic text analysis on populism was done by Pauwels (2011) to measure the degree of populist communication among Belgian parties (Pauwels, 2011; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). This landmark study has since become the starting point for most revised populist dictionaries (Dia, 2022; Gründl, 2020; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). Most current dictionaries have since used iterative techniques and human-coded processes to refine and test the validity of words chosen to represent populist claims (Bonikowski & Gidron, 2016).

Table 2: Analyzing Political Text

	Collection Strategy	Unit of Analysis	Data Source
Quantitative Text Analysis	Automated (supervised or unsupervised)	Words and N-grams	Any text sources
	Automated (dictionary)	Words and N-grams	Speeches, manifestos, newspapers
	Human coding	Quasi-sentence	Manifestos
	Human coding	Paragraph	Speeches and Manifestos

Table adapted from: Stuvland, A. M. (2021). *Talking Like a Populist? Exploring Populism in Six Western Democracies* George Mason University.

The validity of dictionary-based approaches is often contested in academic literature due to inherent limitations with pre-defined lists of keywords to identify and measure complex political phenomena (Hawkins et al., 2019; Kaltwasser et al., 2017). Keywords are thought to overlook important nuances and variations, especially cultural and linguistic differences in the way populism is expressed (Kaltwasser et al., 2017). Unlike a standard content analysis, which asks a human coder to make inferences on context, the dictionary method assumes all individual words matter (Benoit, 2020; Dai, 2018; Grimmer et al., 2022). By treating a text as a ‘bag of words’, dictionary methods ignore both the order and context of individual words, which is thought of be especially problematic with context-specific populist word choices (Benoit, 2020; Dai, 2018). While many researchers advise against an dictionary-aided analysis, it remains a widely used measurement for populist communication across a variety of sources even more than a decade after the first implementation (Bernhard et al., 2015; Dia, 2022; Gründl, 2020; Maurer & Diehl, 2020; Oliver & Rahn, 2016; Stuvland, 2021; Tóth et al., 2023).

The quantitative portion of this thesis follows the trend of a computer-assisted dictionary-based approach to assess populist communication across 82 electoral manifestos within four countries. Partly in response to the aforementioned validity concerns, many populism dictionaries have evolved over the past decade to assess populist rhetoric more accurately across cultural and linguistic contexts. Surprisingly, the original dictionary terms first identified by Pauwel’s (2011) remains fairly consistent across different iterations of dictionaries, despite (or perhaps because of) rigorous re-testing of terms (Gründl, 2020; Storz & Bernauer, 2018). This study uses two distinct populism dictionaries to assess German and English electoral manifestos, both based on Pauwel’s (2011) original terms.

The English dictionary is adopted from Stuvland’s (2021) Ph.D dissertation which, in addition to retesting Pauwel’s keyword list, adds context specific words for the United States. This paper uses the automated populist dictionary developed in Stuvland's research, which enhanced and tested automated coding results through a hand-coding process (Stuvland, 2021). No validated keyword list specific to Australia is available at this time, but the consistency of core dictionary terms across most revised dictionaries is expected to result in low variability. For the full list of words used see Table 3. The German dictionary list is also adopted from Pauwel’s (2011) core stemmed words, to include revised terms, as seen in Gründl’s (2021) research in Table 4. While further research has argued for specific keywords for German, Austrian, and Swiss contexts, this study maintains that linguistic rather than cultural factors are more important in the selection of relevant words.

Table 3: English Dictionary of Populist Words and Phrases

<u>Pauwel (2011)</u> <u>Core Terms (Stemmed)</u>	elit* , consensus* , undemocratic* , referendum* , corrupt* , propagand* , politici* , deceit* , betray* , shame* , scandal* , truth* dishonest* , establishm* , ruling
<u>Stuvland (2021)</u> <u>USA context-specific</u>	cheat* , crook* , globalis* , radical* , ideolog *

Table 3: Zadekia Karondorfer · Source: Stuvland, A. M. (2021). Talking Like a Populist? Exploring Populism in Six Western Democracies (Ph.D. Dissertation, George Mason University)

Table 4: German Dictionary of Populist Words and Phrases

<u>Roodujin & Pauwels (2011) Core Terms (Stemmed)</u>	elit* , konsens* , undemokratisch* , referend* , korrupt* , propagand* , politiker* , täusch* , betrüg , betrug* , *verrat* , scham* , schäm* , skandal* , wahrheit* , unfair* , unehrlich* , establishm* , *herrsch* , lüge , internationalismus* , kapitalisten*
<u>Pauwels (2017)</u>	gier* , grosskonzern* , imerialismus* , imperialistisch* , lakai* , monopol* , oligarch* , oligarchie* , plutokratie* , abgehoben* , anti-basisdemokratisch* , anti-demokratisch* , antibasisdemokratic , antidemokratisch* , aristokrat* , aufhals , aufzwing , ausbeuter* , autokrati* , elite* , elitär* , eurokraten* , eurokratie* , geldadel* , herrschend* , internationalistisch* , kooptier* , korrupt* , kumpanen* , plünder* , propagand* , technokrat* , ungewählt*

Table 4: Zadekia Karondorfer · Source: Gründl, J. (2020). Populist ideas on social media: A dictionary-based measurement of populist communication. *New Media & Society*, 24, 146144482097697

3.4.4 Coding in R-Studio

After collecting the data from the CMP/MARPOR database, this study uses open-source coding language R, RStudio, and MS Excel, to complete and conduct the analysis. In order to access all relevant electoral documents, the search query to CMP/MARPOR database included the country name and the dates range between 2000 and 2020. This was to ensure reproducibility each time a query was established. For future replicability, use the database manifesto project 2022(a). The ‘manifesto_id(s)’ were stored both in the R environment and in an additional Excel table to ensure that all 82 political parties remained represented throughout the study.

For the dictionary-based assessment, this study uses the ‘bag of words’ approach to the political party manifestos of each of the countries. The bag of words technique does not place value on the words themselves, but instead identifies individual words with limited value input from the researcher. To transform the political manifestos into a machine-readable ‘bag of words’ corpus, this research uses the publicly available API keys from the CMP database to import electoral manifestos in RStudio environment. The R-package (manifestoR) renders the CMP database searchable by country, political party, and year, and automatically transforms the annotated documents into a workable form of quasi-sentences. It is then possible to filter by a document’s unique ‘manifesto_id’, defined as the political party’s number and date of publication. These could be further sub-grouped by annotated coding schemes found in the text or ‘cmp_code(s)’, though this research does not utilize the CMP codes⁹ (Lehmann et al., 2022). The individual or grouped electoral documents were transformed into a quanteda corpus as a data

⁹ Further details on cmp_codes can be found on the MARPOR website.

frame, with the meta data. The text was then cleaned and processed into tokens to enable a ‘bag of words’ analysis. All punctuation and padding were removed, text was transformed into lower case, and built in quanteda stop_word lists of German and English to remove unnecessary words. The tokens were transformed into a document feature matrix and compared against the populism dictionary list. Results were grouped by manifesto_id (or doc_id) and turned into weighted percentages against the overall number of tokens (or number of words per document).

3.5 Qualitative Content Analysis

The second research question (RQ2) of this study aims to investigate the extent to which RWP express climate skepticism and opposition towards climate policies in their party manifestos. To achieve this goal, a qualitative content analysis approach is employed across select right-wing political parties. Qualitative content analysis systematically categorizes texts into identifiable patterns (Bryman, 2016). The secondary component of this study assesses the level of climate skepticism and climate policy adoption across selected RWP to provide insights into how right-wing political parties address climate change, and the extent to which they prioritize climate policies in their election manifestos. As a starting point, the analysis draws upon the codebooks developed from two relevant publications identifying and relating categories relevant to climate policies (Oswald et al., 2021) and climate skepticism (Vihma et al., 2021) in populist parties. These codebooks are expanded iteratively to include additional climate policies and language. By employing this methodology, this research answers the second RQ2: to what extent do RWP climate skepticism and opposition towards climate policies in their party manifestos? Research into how major right-wing political parties in Germany, Austria, Australia, and the United States address climate change in their manifestos can inform future policy discussions and decision-making. Throughout this thesis, all quotations are taken from the electoral manifestos of the RWP from the 2016 and 2017 electoral cycle.

3.5.1 The Case for Quantifying Codebooks in Qualitative Research

While some scholars argue that quantitative and qualitative research methods are irreconcilably linked to opposite epistemological positions, the difference is often exaggerated because it is hard to prove a deterministic relationship (Bryman, 2016). Qualitative content analysis remains fundamentally a qualitative research method, even when it employs elements of

quantitative analysis. Moreover, some researchers use both approaches in their work, as a quantitative approach can be employed for the analysis of qualitative studies, or a qualitative approach used to examine the rhetoric of quantitative researchers (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, while this study uses an iterative approach to redefine existing qualitative content analysis codebooks and frameworks, it also makes use of a quantitative visualization of the data and findings. Qualitative content analysis can become quantitative when a codebook is used because it provides a set of predefined categories that can be quantified. However, even with a codebook, the interpretation of the data remains subjective and open to multiple interpretations.

3.5.2 Framework for Climate Skepticism

The first codebook utilizes a ‘reference model’ to assess the extent of populist strategic communication countering progressive climate change policies (Vihma et al., 2021). The researchers define populist strategic communication as a form of anti-elitist political messaging within a political movement. The authors align themselves with Norris and Inglehart’s (2019) definition of populism and therefore, fall under the pre-requisites of this study’s operational definition (see Chapter 2.1). The study compiles the arguments made by right-wing populists against ambitious climate policies into three ‘Weberian ideal-typical’ positions: climate science denialist, climate policy nationalist, and climate policy conservative (Vihma et al., 2021). These categorizations are thought to follow a long tradition of contemporary climate policy debate in light of the politization of climate policies in 1990s (Vihma et al., 2021). The climate denialist position claims that there is no scientific consensus on climate change. The climate nationalist position emphasizes national sovereignty and argues for a short-term, lookout-for-our-own mentality in contrast to the global collective action needed to address climate change (Vihma et al., 2021). The third and final position questions the economic and political measures proposed to deal with climate change, and instead emphasizes how technological progress will curb emissions at a later stage. Unlike the climate denialists and climate nationalists, they do not deny the meaningfulness of domestic climate action. The full codebook with narrative explanations is found in Table 5.

Table 5: Three Strategic Perspectives on Opposing Ambitious Climate Change Policies

	Climate denialist	Climate nationalist	Climate conservative
Position on science	There is no scientific consensus on climate change	Science is real; some uncertainties persist	Science is real; some uncertainties persist
The big picture	‘Climate change’ is a conspiracy of the liberal elite	Opponents are panicking; we have realism	Opponents are panicking; we have realism
Domestic agenda	Deregulation	Deregulation	Maintain current ambition/support new, efficient minimal-cost policies
International position	Globalists are conspiring and trying to curb individual liberties; China benefits	Industrial competitiveness; small countries can do nothing, only China can.	Cautious cooperation; emphasize national sovereignty
Motto	Climate change is a hoax!	Our industry is already cleaner than that of other nations!	Technological development will fix this!

Adapted from: Vihma, A., Reischl, G., & Andersen, A. (2021) A Climate Backlash: Comparing Populist Parties’ Climate Policies in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden. *The Journal of Environment & Development*, 30, 107049652110277.

While Vihma et al. (2021) developed a framework for understanding the opposition to ambitious climate policies in the Nordic context, the authors drew upon a rich body of literature related to climate skepticism research beyond the Nordic region. First, the authors reference the extensive scholarly interest in the climate science denialist position, particularly in the United States, where denialism has many definitions and been subject to organized denial campaigns (Vihma et al., 2021). The authors reference similar literature concerning climate denialism in the United States, including the funding and mobilization of fossil-fuel interest groups with right-wing political groups (Brulle, 2014; Dunlap & Jacques, 2013; Farrell, 2016; McCright, 2016; McCright & Dunlap, 2010). Similarly, Vihma et al. (2021) draws upon Forchtner et al. (2018) research confirming the link between far-right ideology and climate denialism in the German context (Forchtner et al., 2018; McCright, Dunlap, et al., 2016). Vihma et al. (2021) also reference Van Rensburg’s (2017) work that focuses on climate skepticism in the Australian context, to help contextualize the climate conservative position as emphasizing realism, or the ‘cool judgment’ against the perceived emotionality of those who support ambitious climate policies (Rensburg & Head, 2017). In addition, the authors argue that the climate nationalist position, which centers on the responsibility of other countries and the notion that some countries have already done their share while others are free-riding, is a remarkably similar position among politicians in the United States, Europe, and developing countries, indicating its status as an international position (Vihma et al., 2021). Vihma et al. (2021) use this extensive literature to provide a nuanced understanding of the strategic opposition to ambitious climate policies, extending beyond the Nordic context. Therefore, Vihma et al.’s (2021) framework is applicable to various national contexts, including

Germany, the United States, Australia, and Austria, as the strategic climate skepticism positions are shaped by a global body of research.

After initial screening of the material, this study applies an iterative process to develop a refined coding framework based on the common party positioning and climate skepticism language. First, in measuring climate skepticism, this M.Sc. thesis found it important to include a counter position to the climate skeptic stance. Such a position entails i) the recognition of the gravity and reality of anthropogenically caused climate change, ii) endorsement of climate policies specifically to tackle global warming, iii) acknowledgement of concerted international efforts and global collective action, and iv) promotion of transformative socio-economic policies in addition to technological innovations. This position enables for a more nuanced and comprehensive exploration of the commonly-assumed association between RWP and climate skepticism. This study defines this position as climate progressive and is visualized in Table 6.

Table 6: Iterative Coding Framework for Measuring Climate Skepticism

	Climate Denialism	Climate Nationalism	Climate Conservative	Climate Progressive
Position on Science	There is no scientific consensus on climate change	Science is real, but uncertainties persist	Science is real, but uncertainties persist	Science is real: the global phenomenon of climate change is caused and accelerated by humans
The Big Picture	'Climate change' is a conspiracy of the elite	We have realism: the 'cool judgment' while others/opponents panic	We have realism: the 'cool judgment' while others/opponents panic	Man-made climate change is a global threat, affecting everyone
Domestic Agenda	Support for de-regulative policies and decentralization of government power	Support for de-regulative policies and decentralization of government power	Maintain current position/aims, but support for low cost and efficient policies	Support for policies that directly address and tackle global warming caused by man-made emissions, including transformational climate policies
International Position	Globalists and Elites conspire to curb Individual liberties	Industrial and Economic Competitiveness is principal	Cautious cooperation with international community	Global cooperation is needed and necessary
Motto	Climate change is a hoax	Our industry is already cleaner than other nations!	Technological development will fix this	Technological development and transformational social change are needed

Table: Zadekia Krondorfer

In addition, this study elaborates upon each of the climate skepticism categorizations to provide a more distinct and nuanced understanding of each of the perspectives. To achieve this, the study elaborates on the concept of deregulation within the domestic agenda category to clarify that this entails an endorsement for policies reducing regulations, and support for transferring power from a centralized government to local or regional authorities. Additionally, this study departs from Vihma et. al. (2021) by excluding the international positioning and perspectives on

China. Disregarding China better reflects the scope and research objectives of this project. However, this thesis does recognize Vihma et. al.'s (2021) assertion that the complexity of real-world politics do not fit neatly into the ideal types (Vihma et al., 2021). Also, this thesis follows the original schema by choosing not to differentiate between environmental denialism and climate denialism. This methodological choice reflects the practical reality of politics where these concepts are used interchangeable (for further explanation, see Section 2.3).

3.5.3 Framework for Climate Policies

The second codebook utilized in this study serves as a basis for analyzing RWP(s) stances on specific climate policies. The framework is built off on research by Oswald et. al. (2021) which uses a comparative qualitative content analysis to examine the determinants regarding environmental strategies of right-wing populist parties in Germany and France (Oswald et al., 2021). In their article, the authors define populism as a political strategy built upon populist rhetoric and mobilization strategies. The authors use a political opportunity structure approach to assess the discursive framing of specific pro or contra climate policy positions based on the theory by Lockwood (2018) that right-wing ideology and climate change skepticism are inherently linked (Lockwood, 2018). This study, however, does not follow the argumentative sub-categorizations of Lockwood (i.e., opposition based on anti-establishment, culture, environmentalist, or economic reasoning), but does use the preliminary framework to establish primary environmental policy positions (Oswald et al., 2021). The inductively built categories for environment related issues, and their pro and contra definitive stances, are used as rough categorizations for coding. These include progressive energy policy, transportation, regional global environmental protection, and international agreements. Progressive energy policy is defined as policy in support of renewable energies, such as wind, solar, and hydro, in the power supply of the country. The phasing out of fossil fuel energies is captured under Anti- Fossil Fuel Category, which defines fossils as lignite, hard coal, peat, natural gas, and petroleum. Fossil-fueled mobility sectors, on the other hand, are captured under the transformation of the transportation and mobility sector to replace new methods of locomotion. For further examples, find an excerpt of Oswald et. al. (2021) coding scheme in the Table 7.

Table 7: Policy Positions Coded Based on Categories

Code	Subcode	AfD (%)	RN (%)
Man-made climate change: The belief that the global phenomenon of climate change is caused and accelerated by humans	Denial of man-made climate change	0.00	0.00
	Anti-Mainstream/Establishment	0.00	0.00
	Culture	0.00	0.00
	Environment	1.01	0.00
	Economic	0.00	0.00
	Affirmation of man-made climate change	0.00	0.00
Progressive energy policies: Desired policy change towards the use of renewable energies for the power supply of the country	Contra progressive energy policies	0.00	0.00
	Anti-Mainstream/Establishment	0.00	0.00
	Culture	0.00	0.00
	Environment	0.00	0.50
	Economic	0.00	0.00
	Anti-Mainstream/Establishment	0.50	0.00
	Culture	0.00	0.00
	Environment	2.26	0.13
	Economic	6.79	0.38
	Pro progressive energy policies	0.00	0.00
Culture	0.00	0.00	
Environment	0.00	0.13	
Economic	0.00	0.75	

Note: (AfD) stands for Alternative for Germany & (RN) stands for the French National Rally party.

Table adapted from: Oswald, M., Fromm, M., & Broda, E. (2021). Strategic clustering in right-wing-populism? ‘Green policies’ in Germany and France Strategisches Clustering im Rechtspopulismus? „Grüne Politik” in Deutschland und Frankreich. *Zeitschrift für Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft*, 15.

The coding scheme employed in this study, as the definitive pro and contra coding scheme, is considered suitable for capturing the intricate nature of the political landscape regarding climate policies. The framework proposed by Oswald et al. (2021) views policy positions as openly expressed viewpoints that can be framed in a way that appeals to a broader audience and aligns with their overall political orientation (Oswald et al., 2021). It recognizes that political parties engage in competition to attract voters, and their positions are strategically designed to satisfy their voter base while differentiating themselves from rival parties. This study modifies the coding framework by removing certain categories such as strengthening of rural areas, climate change position (as it pertains to climate skepticism measurement), political institutions, and argumentative sub-categorizations. Instead, the framework is refined to include stances on carbon tax, nuclear energy, and carbon capture technologies in a pro and contra context. In addition, this study modifies the regional environmental protection category to capture the decentralizing policies/discourses that argue environmental protection is best achieved on local and regional scales rather than through overarching federal or international levels. The refined codebook is found in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Iterative Coding Framework for Climate Policies

Climate Policy	Pro	Contra/ “Anti”
Progressive energy policies: Desired policy change towards the use of renewable energies for the power supply of the country	Introduce and support wind, solar, hydro	In direct opposition to wind, solar, hydro-electric power
Fossil energies: Usage of Fossil fuels such as lignite, hard coal, peat, natural gas ,and petroleum for energy production	Support for the use of existing and/or new fossil fuel energies	Closing and phasing out fossil fuels
Transformation of the transportation and mobility sector: Technological progress leads to new methods of locomotion such as electric cars which can replace the current transportation and mobility sector	Support electric vehicles, transformation for more public transportation/walking/biking/ other forms of mobility	Support for diesel vehicles, trucks, additional road lanes for more traffic
Regional environmental protection: Advocating to save the environment through discursive, ideational, or material resources. The protection of the natural environment on a regional level-as opposed to global environmental protection International agreements: Existing international treaty that has already been ratified	“Locals know best”, decentralization of government power, less regulations Support for multi-national environmental agreements	Pro-centralization, More government regulation Retracting from international agreements including the EU, Paris Agreement, etc.
Carbon Tax	Support for carbon or emission taxes	Not in support of existing or new emission taxes
Nuclear Energy	In support of existing nuclear plants, more funding for research, future nuclear power	Support the closing and phasing out of nuclear energy

Table: Zadekia Krondorfer

3.5.4 Coding in MAQXDA

Software programs in qualitative research are useful in managing large amounts of data and facilitating the analysis of complex relationships among data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This study makes use of the MAQXDA (2022) software to facilitate a systematic approach to coding and analysis of textual data, including visual representation of results. The unit of analysis was restricted to the sentence level in order to assess the estimated number of certain themes or policy positions occurred throughout the texts. Occasionally, smaller sentences were grouped together in pairs. Coding at the sentence level is thought of to provide a more precise and specific unit of analysis, thus improving the reliability of the analysis, and allowing for greater replicability (Bryman, 2016). Included in this analysis is the context surrounding of the sentence. In this way, the qualitative content analysis reflects a more thematic qualitative analysis that incorporates the discourses and content in which the sentence is embedded.

In order to ensure the rigor and reliability of the analysis, the coding process is conducted thrice. First, an iterative process was employed to adapt the coding framework to the text and research questions. This was achieved by using party positioning and climate skepticism language guidelines, resulting in a refined coding framework. Secondly, the full text was coded at the sentence level, a unit of analysis deemed to provide greater precision and specificity, thus

improving the reliability and replicability of the analysis. Thirdly, the text was reexamined to catch any mistakes and verify the accuracy of the information. The accuracy of the coding was manually checked using the MAQXDAS software. By utilizing a thorough and iterative approach to the coding process, this study aimed to ensure the accuracy and validity of the results obtained through the analysis of the textual data.

3.6 Limitations

A primary limitation of this study may be the use of an embedded mixed methods design. The critique against embedded methods contends that research methods are inherently linked to epistemological positions, and thus mixed methods research is undesirable due to the irreconcilable views of the two methods (Bryman, 2016). However, this argument does not seem to hold true in the context of this study.

The study is constrained by several limitations related to the selection of data material. Firstly, the analysis is limited to Western democracies, which may restrict its applicability to other contexts. For example, features more unique to Western democracies, such as established parties/party systems, institutions, and electoral rules, may diminish the practical appeal of populism (Stuvland, 2021) or increase the likelihood of climate skepticism (McCright, 2016). Due to time constraints and research design, the thesis is also unable to comprehensively account for the intricate cultural, historical, and political specificities of each context, diminishing the analysis's depth and richness. Conversely, the selection of the four countries may be subject to criticism precisely because the nuances across them are not so significant, considering that the Anglo-Saxon and German contexts are already overrepresented in the literature on populism and climate skepticism (Lockwood, 2018; McCright, Charters, et al., 2016). Additionally, empirical evidence suggests populist communication is more prevalent on different platforms, such as social media platforms, in contrast to speeches or technocratic texts (Ernst et al., 2019; Gründl, 2020; Marquardt et al., 2022; Vihma et al., 2021). The case selection can also be critiqued for choosing to assess established political parties rather fringe political parties, considering that the link between political fringe parties and populist rhetoric has already been established (Huber et al., 2022). This is particularly true for the context of Australia, where fringe political parties like Pauline Hanson's One Nation in Australia are usually studied under right-wing political party definitions (Moffitt, 2016). In contrast, this study takes a homogeneous approach to political

parties and overlooks how political leaders integrate or incorporate narratives from fringe political groups. For example, scholars have assessed how leaders within Australia's Liberal National Party appropriated elements of populism and climate skepticism to counter political threats of Pauline Hanson's One Nation (Lockwood, 2018).

The study is also reliant upon the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) coding scheme, which has been criticized for its reliability and validity issues including misidentifying policy positions (Gemenis, 2013). During this MS.c thesis, the researcher discovered that the manifestoR package did not calculate the RILE correctly. When confronted with the disparities between the two RILE calculations, the Manifesto Project Communication team suggested that it 'was most likely to be an outcome of the specifics of the count_codes function in manifestoR package'. They promised to fix this issue on the next yearly update. While the RILE calculations are also available on the online database and therefore did not affect the analysis of left – right ideological calculation, there is a high probability that the dictionary-based analysis for populism contains a similar error of not including all count_codes. If such an error exists, then the populism calculation used in this study would be inaccurate.

3.6.1 Quantitative Limitations

While the quantitative portion of this thesis already discusses various methodological limitations, the following section highlights limitations that have not been previously identified and discussed. The dictionary-based approach for identifying populist communication is a crucial limitation, as qualitative content analysis researchers discourage making inferences solely based on computer-assisted dictionaries (Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011). The validity of dictionary-based approaches is often contested in academic literature due to inherent limitations with pre-defined lists of keywords to identify and measure complex political phenomena. Instead, some populist researchers often suggest employing a holistic coding approach in combination with automated content analysis, adding that it is the most commonly used method for measuring the ideational approach to populism (Hawkins et al., 2019; Stuvland, 2021). Though time limitations prevented this study to add the holistic approach to qualitative content analysis of the political manifestos, future research ought to address it. In addition, while both the English and German dictionaries are based on Pauwel (2011) original terms, they do significantly vary in length. This disparity arises primarily because the dictionary-based approach is more commonly used, assessed, and

verified in German-speaking contexts. In particular, results may be most skewed in the Australian context, as this is the least represented in populist automated research approaches. Finally, the approach to use two dictionaries based on linguistic factors may overlook the cultural differences in the way populism is expressed across different contexts and can lead to incomplete or inaccurate results.

3.6.2 Qualitative Limitations

The following section outlines limitations that were not discussed in the methodological qualitative section. Primarily, the qualitative phase of the study utilizes a subjective and thematic approach to content analysis, which may introduce researcher bias in the interpretation of data (Bryman, 2016). While the study uses codebooks developed from relevant publications, these may not capture all possible dimensions, such as economic, social, or cultural factors which influence climate policies. Additionally, this thesis consists of one researcher. A single researcher therefore applied the coding framework to the manifestos. While this is arguably a strength of the analysis, as it ensures the framework is applied consistently across political parties, it may also introduce a subjective bias in the interpretation of data (Bryman, 2016). All translations from German to English were completed by the researcher, with some assistance from Google Translator. As the translations were primarily informed by the researcher's expertise and experience, and some interpretation biases and errors may exist.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the research findings derived from both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Firstly, the study evaluates the ideological positioning of political parties using the RILE calculation, a built-in CMP/MARPOR tool, from 2000 to 2020 across all electoral manifestos in Australia, Austria, Germany, and the United States. Secondly, an automated dictionary-based approach is employed to measure the extent of populist communication of those electoral manifestos. The graphs and visualizations included in this chapter depict the results based on the 2016/2017 election years, while additional data visualizations for the election years between 2013 – 2020 can be found in the Appendix A. The case selection for the qualitative assessment is based on the RILE calculation, but this sampling approach is compared with Pippa Norris' GPS study (section 5.3), which employs a uniform methodology to assess ideological positioning and populism. This cross-validation reinforces the selection of cases for the qualitative content assessment of RWP to climate skepticism and opposition to climate policies.

4.1 Ideological Positioning of Political Parties

The initial quantitative findings obtained from this study display intriguing patterns in the political ideologies and language of the parties across four countries. The RILE scale shows the most consistent results for the United States, with a polarizing trend for both the Democratic and Republican parties (see Appendix A). Over time, the Republican Party is shown to exhibit more increasing right-leaning policy preferences. Due to the COVID pandemic and other political reasons, the Republican Party chose to repurpose the 2016 manifesto in the 2020 election year. For this reason, the RILE scale shows the same policy preference calculation (+32). Similar to the United States, the Alternative for Germany (AfD) is clearly the most far-right party and its right-leaning tendencies have increased over time. In 2013, the AfD scores center-left (-2) compared to the 2021 manifesto which scored highly right (+26). In Austria, the Austrian Freedom Party scores hovers consistently around (+11) for the three election periods and triumphs all other political parties in terms of right-leaning tendencies. However, a slight variation can be noted in 2017 election, where the Austrian People's Party scores higher by fraction. However, the consistency of Austria's Freedom Party to score solidly to the higher on the RILE scale over time warrants the selection.

Figure 2

Measuring Left- Right Ideological Positioning across 2016- 2017

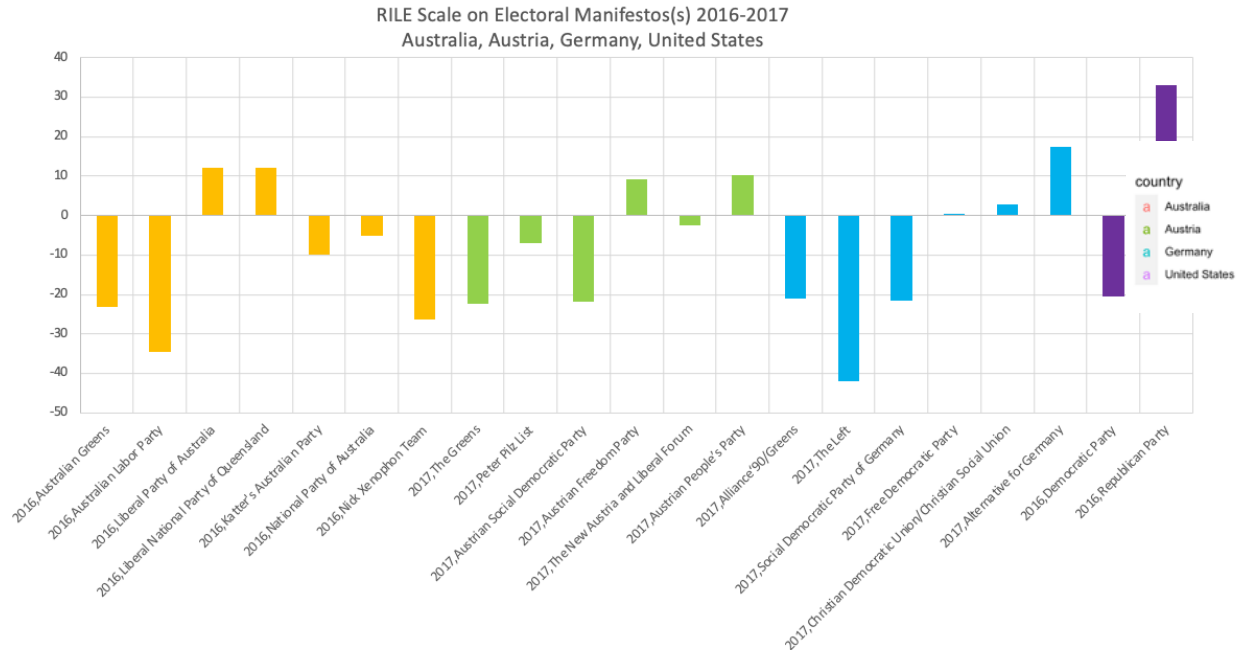


Figure 2: Electoral manifestos scored based on number of ‘left’ and ‘right’ coded policy positions across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained during the 2016 and 2017 election in Austria, United States, Germany, and Australia. Positive scores relate to higher number of ‘right’ coded policy positives; negative scores relate to a higher number of ‘left’ coded policy positions.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer · Source: CMP/MARPOR database

In Australia, the RILE scaling shows a decrease in right-leaning policy preferences across political parties. In 2010, the Liberal Party of Australia scored high right (+41), however decreased over the course of three election periods (+12). It is critical to note that the manifestos for the Liberal and the Liberal National of Queensland are identical as they make up the broader coalition for the Liberal National Party. The essential two-party system of Australia renders the distinction made by the CMP database essentially nonexistent. This study therefore refers to as the Liberal Party as the Liberal National Party. However, this study does not manipulate the CMP database and uses the distinction in the visual graphs. Despite the overall decrease for right policy preferences, the Liberal National remains one of the more right leaning political parties in the country. For a country comparison of the election cycle from 2016 to 2017, see Figure 2.

4.2 Populist Rhetoric across Political Parties

The dictionary-based approach measuring the amount of populist words within each electoral manifesto discovers the following patterns: first, in the United States, the Republican Party clearly demonstrates more populist rhetoric compared to their Democratic counterpart. For both parties, the use of populist words increases over time, with the Republican Party's manifestos of 2016/2020 using around 3% of the tokenized corpus (for full graph, see Appendix). In Germany, populist rhetoric appears to be a ubiquitous feature of political parties' electoral manifestos, with the Green Coalition(s) employing it more extensively than others. Unexpectedly, in this analysis, the AfD does not exhibit a significant use of populist rhetoric in this analysis. In Australia, populist communication is low across the political spectrum. It is noteworthy that the Green and Labor parties, despite being positioned towards the lower end of the left-wing on the RILE scale, exhibit a relatively higher usage of populist language compared to their right-wing populist counterparts, such as the Liberal National. Austria, in contrast, is notable for the extreme amount of populist communication used by the right-wing political party. The Austrian Freedom Party is followed by the conservative Austrian People's Party, with the left-wing Greens coming in third, albeit still far behind the FPÖ. For a snapshot comparison of all four countries during the 2016/2017 election cycle, see Figure 3 below.

The quantitative analysis of this study finds that the U.S. Republican Party, Austrian Freedom Party, Alternative for Germany, and Australian Liberal National, exhibit relatively high degrees of populist communication within their country's political system. Strongest results demonstrate that the Republican Party and the Austrian Freedom Party employ clear populist language and score firmly right. In Germany and Australia, the results are not as well supported. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) scores low on populism, but high on the RILE scale (see Figure 4 below). The results for Australia are similarly perplexing, as the Australian Labor Party scores high on the populism scale and very left on RILE, while the RILE right-wing Liberal National scores low on the populism dictionary, possibly due to the English dictionary not being tailored to the Australian context. However, it is important to acknowledge that these results are dependent upon the CMP/MARPOR database and subsequent manifestoR package and R-code. A study employing other methodology might find variations to the findings demonstrated in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

Figure 3

Dictionary-Based Measurement of Populism across 2016 – 2017 Electoral Manifestos

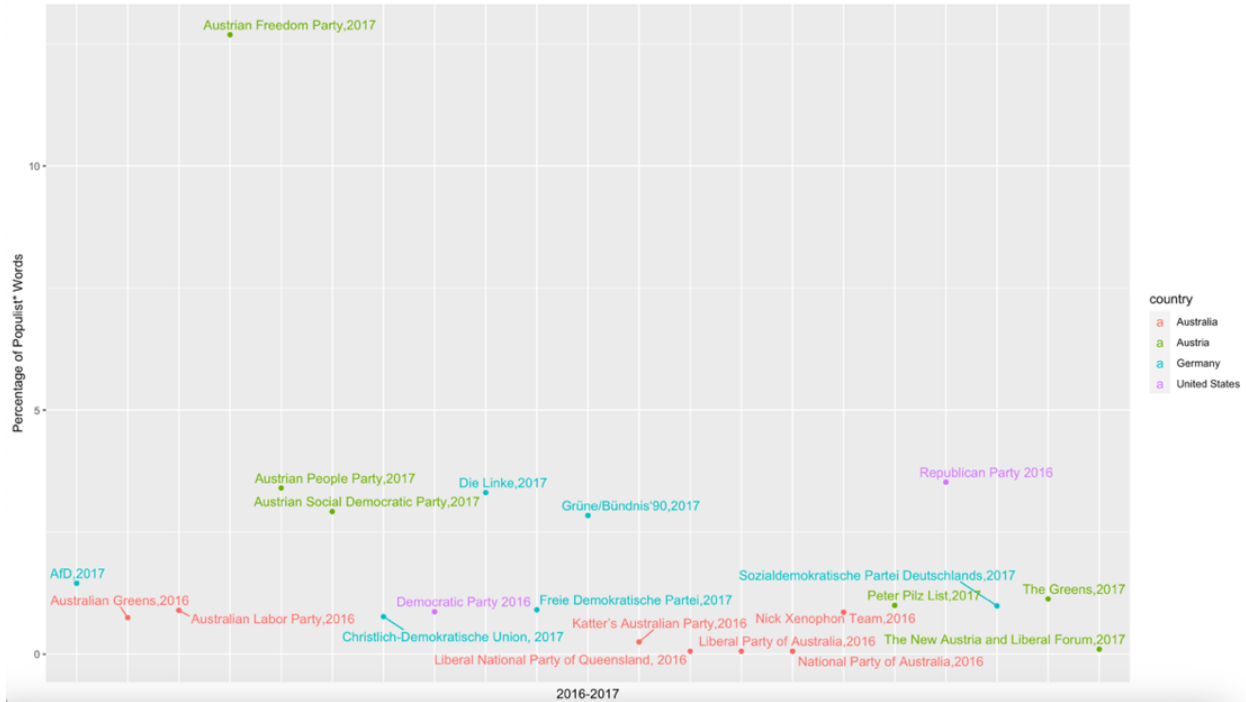


Figure 3: Percentage of populist rhetoric measured across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained during the 2016 and 2017 election in Austria, United States, Germany, and Australia.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer

Figure 4

Assessment of Populism and Ideological Positioning across 2016 – 2017 Electoral Manifestos

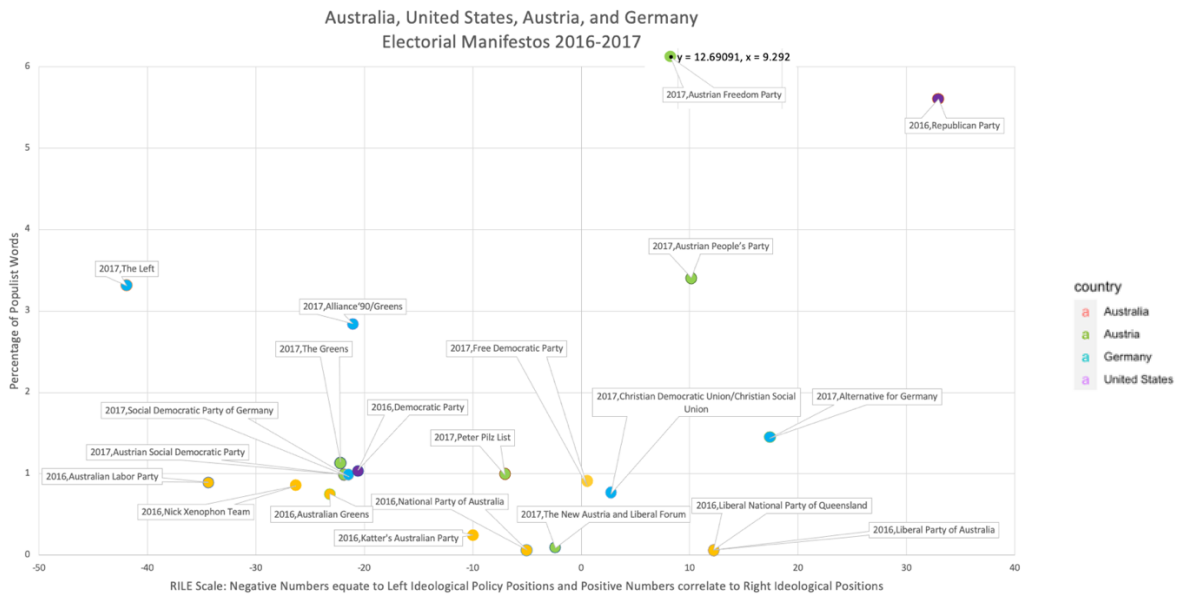


Figure 4: Graphed visualization of political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained during the 2016/2017 elections. The x-axis measures RILE ideological positioning and y-axis the percentage of dictionary-assessed populist words. The colors indicate country affiliation: blue represents Germany, orange represents Australia, green represents Austria, and purple represents the United States.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer

4.3 Verifying Qualitative Case Selection: Identifying Right-Wing Parties as “Populist”

The case selection for the qualitative content analysis is primarily assessed through the RILE calculation, where the Republican Party, Alternative for Germany, Liberal National Party, Freedom Party of Austria, score higher on the CMP RILE scale. However, to enhance the selection of right-wing political parties that have previously been investigated as “populist”, this study draws upon Pippa Norris Global Party Survey study. As one of the only databases that employs a uniform measurement of populism and ideology across global country contexts, Norris's (2020) methodology estimates the level of populism and political positioning of political parties in 163 countries through the use of expert survey questions (Norris, 2020). Importantly, Norris’ operational definition of populism aligns with this study’s conceptualization that gauges populist rhetoric within the minimal ideational definition. However, the identification of populism is obtained through expert surveys, which differs from this study's methodology, and thus strengthens any results obtained from this study.

Pippa Norris' study is recognized as one of the most rigorous and robust studies to measure populism and right/left ideology (Di Cocco & Monechi, 2022; Huber et al., 2022). The robustness of the results perform well when compared to the Positions on Populism (POPPA) database, where experts locate the ideational position of European political parties toward populism. The results strongly correlate to populist positioning against the PopuList database, did remarkably similar estimates of party positions compared to the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CHES) and Parliament and Government composition (ParlGov) databases (Norris, 2020). Norris’s analysis finds support for the Republican Party, Austrian Freedom Party, Alternative for Germany, as strongly positioned ‘right-conservative’, ‘strongly populist’, and ‘populist-conservative’. The exception is the Australia’s Liberal National Party, which scores ‘moderately populist’. For an excerpt of the Global Party Survey database, see Table 9.

The findings of the GPS study help substantiate the selection of right-wing political parties as suitable candidates for a qualitative inquiry into the interplay between populism, climate skepticism, and opposition to climate policies. The qualitative content analysis is performed on the 2016/2017 electoral manifestos from the Republican Party, Alternative for Germany, Liberal National Party, and Austrian Freedom Party.

Table 9: Graphed Results from Pippa Norris’ Global Party Survey

Type_Populism:	Type_Populism_Values:	Type_Value:
The Party Populism typology categorizes whether parties favor the use of pluralism or populist rhetoric into four groups. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strongly Pluralist 2. Moderately Pluralist 3. Moderately Populist 4. Strongly Populist 	The Populist Values typology combines the categories of rhetoric and social values for each party. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pluralist-Liberal 2. Pluralist- Conservative 3. Populist-Liberal 4. Populist- Conservative 	The Party Values Typology combines two binary variables for each party, namely whether types of economic values are Left (pro-state) or Right (pro-market), and whether types of social values are Liberal or Conservative. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Left-Liberal 2. Left- Conservative 3. Right-Liberal 4. Right- Conservative
Liberal National Party of Australia	3	4
Freedom Party of Austria	4	4
Alternative for Germany	4	4
Republican Party of the United States	4	4

Table: Zadekia Krondorfer · Source: Norris, P. (2020). Measuring populism worldwide. *Party Politics*, 26(6), 697-717.

4.4 Climate Skepticism and Policies in Right-Wing Parties

The majority of the text within each manifesto was left uncoded due to the irrelevance of the textual information to the topic. Approximately 5% of the overall electoral text was found to be pertinent to the climate skepticism and climate policy frameworks. The Liberal National Party of Australia demonstrated high frequency of relevant climate discourse (6%), albeit the manifesto is comparatively shorter in length. In contrast, the AfD and Republican Parties presented longer manifestos, spanning roughly 70 pages each, and with relatively lower percentages of climate text, around 3% and 4%, respectively. Figure 5 displays overarching trends of coded categories for each of the right-wing populist political parties.

The Liberal National Party of Australia, with the shortest manifesto, has the highest mentions of climate progressive language, no detected climate denialist language, and slight mentions of climate nationalist/conservative language. The manifesto advocated strongly in favor of international environmental agreements and for the transformation of transportation systems, progressive energy policies, and against the proposed carbon tax. The language of the FPÖ in Austria reveals a trend towards climate progressivism, characterized by the conspicuous absence of climate denialist, climate nationalist, or climate conservative language. There is also a clear

trend in the rejection of fossil fuels and nuclear energy, with support for carbon taxes and progressive energy policies. In stark contrast, the manifestos of Alternative for Germany (AfD) party's manifestos contain a substantial amount of climate denialist language, with a clear rejection of the scientific consensus on climate change. The AfD outright denies the role of human activities in causing climate change, with clear support for fossil fuel energies and nuclear energy. Similar to the AfD, the US Republican Party includes a significant amount of climate denialist language, with a mix of climate nationalism and conservatism rhetoric. The Republican Party's manifestos also coded for opposition to international environmental agreements, carbon taxes, and transformation of the transportation industries.

Figure 5

Measuring Climate Skepticism and Climate Policies in Right-wing Populist Parties 2016 – 2017 Electoral Manifestos



Figure 5: Visualization of number of text characters related to climate skepticism and climate policy framework in 2016 and 2017 electoral manifestos in Austria, United States, Germany, and Australia. The colors indicate the ‘pro’ and ‘contra’ stances for identified policies, where green represents the ‘pro’ stance and red represents the ‘contra’ stance. It's important to note that the colors do not represent ‘green’ policies in the environmental sense.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer

The coding of the policy excerpts in the Table 10 below provides a demonstration of the sentence structure coding from the framework. The Australian Liberal National Party is the most clear-cut example of how the same party can adopt varying perspectives on a ‘domestic agenda’ within the climate skepticism framework. The climate progressive excerpt is coded as such because as it mentions specific incentivization projects to reduce carbon emissions. Simultaneously, the party advocated against a carbon tax using rationale that it was ‘too expensive’, falling into the climate conservative position that frames the carbon tax as an inefficient and costly policy for their constituencies. Conversely, the climate nationalist excerpt expresses support for deregulatory policies (cutting red tape), while acknowledging the importance of environmental standards are important to maintain (position on science).

Table 10: Climate Skepticism in Right-wing Parties

Party	Climate Denialism	Climate Nationalism	Climate Conservative	Climate Progressive
Australian Liberal National Party		Domestic Agenda: “We have maintained environmental standards whilst reducing the red tape.”	Domestic Agenda: “We will meet our targets without Labor’s Carbon Tax, which made electricity more expensive for all Australian families.”	Domestic Agenda: “We are investing \$2.55 billion to incentivize business to reduce their emissions through our Emissions Reduction Fund.”
Alternative for Germany	Position on Science: “The statements of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that climate change is predominantly man-made are not scientifically backed.”	International Position: “As a country with few raw materials, only a technological top position can maintain our prosperity in the long term”		
Austrian Freedom Party				Position on Science & Domestic Agenda: “FPÖ supports transforming energy with sustainability. The use of domestic renewable forms of energy is the safest way to achievement of environmental protection goals.”
United States Republican Party	The Big Picture: “The environmental establishment has become a self-serving elite, stuck in the mindset of the 1970s, subordinating the public’s consensus to the goals of the Democratic Party”	International Position & Domestic Agenda : “We support the enactment of policies to increase domestic energy production, including production on public lands, to counter market manipulation by OPEC and other nationally-owned oil companies.”	The Big Picture & Motto: “Even if no additional controls are added, air pollution will continue to decline for the next several decades due to technological turnover of aging equipment.”	

Table: Zadekia Krondorfer

As mentioned in the methodology section, the coding process considers the context surrounding each sentence, implying sentences within the Table 10 are challenging to understand outside of the original context. This is best illustrated by the United States Republican Party' excerpts, which requires contextual understanding for interpretation. The surrounding context of this climate nationalist statement reveals a discussion of 'environmental extremists' and their advocacy for a no-growth economy, in contrast to the consensus to the 'cool judgment' of Republican Party. Therefore, the climate nationalist statement combines multiple elements: the international position towards industrial and economic competitiveness; the idea that deregulation of public lands is central (domestic agenda); the climate nationalist's big picture of realism; and downplaying the effects of environmental harms (position on science). In a similar vein, the climate denialist excerpt is coded based on contextual factors that portray pro-environmental groups as elites and the Democratic Party as proponents of centralizing policies. This is supported by the subsequent sentence that undermines the Democratic Party's approach as being rooted in shoddy science, scare tactics, and centralized command-and-control regulation.

5. Discussion

The starting point of this research is based on the overarching research aim of the CICERO's POPCLIM project, which aims at investigating the links between right-wing populism and opposition to climate science and policy (POPCLIM, 2021). However, there are notable distinctions in the conceptualization between the POPCLIM project and this M.Sc. thesis. Specifically, this thesis seeks to deconstruct the terminology and methodology utilized in the existing literature on right-wing populism, climate policies, climate skepticism, and climate change policies. In contrast, the POPCLIM project adopts a different conceptualization of right-wing populist parties, where the defining and unifying characteristic is nativism, leading, for example, to the inclusion of One Nation in the Australian case, rather than the Liberal National Party. In this research, two reasons prompted a departure from this conceptualization: firstly, the focus was restricted to parties holding parliamentary seats in order to be eligible for inclusion in the CMP database, thereby categorizing One Nation as a fringe political party; secondly, this research commenced with a consideration of left- and right-wing ideological positioning, rather than predetermined categorizations. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, this research endeavors to explore and untangle the interconnections behind these concepts in diverse cross-cultural contexts.

5.1 Assessing Populism in Political Parties

This thesis began by calculating the ideological positioning of parties within the four selected countries. The thesis is partly restricted to traditional measurements of left and right positioning that are integrated into the MARPOR/CMP database. Therefore, not much space is given to the theoretical discussions that capture the vast political science literature on how to distinguish the constitution and importance of binary left/right categorizations, as well as the efforts to measure them. Instead, the justification for using the RILE scale meets both theoretical and practical needs (Budge & McDonald, 2012). First, the RILE policy categorizations align with Lockwood (2018) traditional left-right ideological spectrum for conventional policy preferences: where right-wing populists are economically interventionist. Additionally, they encapsulate a majority of what Lockwood (2018) identifies as ‘missed’ political cleavages within post-industrial societies, such as the cultural dimensions of positive internationalism (coded as per107 under

‘left’) and positive towards law and order (coded as per601 under ‘right’). The theoretical orientation for left versus right political parties is therefore grounded well enough to assess whether the ideological underpinnings of right-wing political parties interact with the dimensions of populism, climate skepticism and policy.

The intersection between ideological positioning and this thesis’ quantitative content analysis of populism does not find evidence for an ideological linkage. There are various explanations for this finding: first, the definition and methodological assessment used in this thesis underpins a minimal ideational definition to conceptualize the concept of populism as closer to a communication strategy than ideological approach. The operationalization of this definition in a computer-assisted dictionary approach relegates the concept into specific keywords, strengthening this association and definition, thus implicitly diminishing the likelihood for establishing an ideological correlation. However, the right/left theoretical orientation and calculation are basis enough to demonstrate how specific policy positions based on both economic and cultural worldviews are, in fact, not correlated to with the use of populist of rhetoric. A look at Stuvlands’ (2021) Ph.D. research concludes with a similar finding across six Western democracies, where most parties use populism as a common rhetorical strategy to appeal to their constituencies and to position their policies across the political spectrum (Stuvland, 2021). However, it is important to note that these findings are dependent on the accuracy of the CMP/MARPOR database and the provided manifestoR package, and should therefore, be validated through further quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The findings of this thesis also indicate that the use of populist communication does not, in fact, increase over the last two decades, as has been suggested by previous scholars (Moffitt, 2016; Mudde, 2004). The majority of political party manifestos show contradictory trends in the use of populist rhetoric over time. If the dictionary-based method is demonstrative of anything, it is that the use of specific populist keywords is volatile. There are a few exceptions to this rule: in the United States, both Democratic and Republican parties seem to engage in more populist communication over time, especially the Republican Party (see Appendix B). A similar increasing trend over time is found in Germany, between the Left Party and the AFD. In addition to the populist communication, both German and the United States context show a significant

polarization effect in their calculation of ideological positions over time (see Appendix A)¹⁰. This suggests a relationship between populist communication and increased polarization in ideological positioning. While this thesis is unable to touch upon the relationship between populism and political polarization, a commonsense analysis finds evidence to support the idea that a populist framing between the pure people (*people centrism*) against a perceived powerful and exploitative elite (*anti-elitism*), is likely to increase political polarization. However, this thesis is unable to fully explore this relationship nor make substantive claims.

This study tentatively answers the first research question (RQ1) by establishing that the prevalence of populist rhetoric in political party's manifestos, particularly right-wing, varies over time and is not consistently correlated to ideological positioning. Further research using qualitative content analysis on populism, for example holistic grading, is recommended to expand upon and triangulate computer assisted dictionary-based approaches. This analysis might investigate the extent to which populist rhetoric is employed in conjunction to particular policy positions (such as immigration, climate, taxes) or specific worldview values (such as emphasis on family composition, abortion, party homogeneity, etc.), to assess how populist rhetoric may be used as a political framing strategy. Additionally, employing a similar positivistic assessment of populist rhetoric political manifesto(s) is also recommended to ensure the accuracy of the CMP/MARPOR database. The use of other textual data, particularly social media sources, will contribute to a richer portrayal of the phenomenon.

5.2 Assessing Climate Skepticism and Climate Policy in Right-Wing 'Populist' Parties

The qualitative content analysis discovered nuanced insights into how right-wing political parties adopt or reject climate science and policy. Lockwood (2018) delineates two categories of right-wing 'populist' climate skepticism based on ideological variations: the 'Anglo-Saxon' and the 'continental European' variety, where climate denialism is at the core for the former but not the latter. However, the present study reveals that the Republican and AfD parties exhibit greater degrees of similarity than the continental divide demarcated by Lockwood (2018). The Australian and Austrian contexts revealed a more apt comparative case than Lockwood's delineation, given

¹⁰ This could also be due to empirical noise, as explained by Bruinsma, B., & Gemenis, K. (2020). Challenging the Manifesto Project data monopoly: Estimating parties' policy position time-series using expert and mass survey data. <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/VTF26G>

that both right-wing parties demonstrated higher support for traditional climate policies, and expressed little to no uncertainty towards climate science. There are a few exceptions to division for comparison: most notably whether or not a party supports carbon taxes, and if they encouraged pro-regional environmental protection.

The Republican Party and AfD are of particular comparative interest as these were the only right-wing political parties that have conveyed explicit climate denialist rhetoric. Both political parties employed forceful and emphatic language when addressing climate change, particularly in their expressions of skepticism towards climate science and the institutions supporting them. The Republican Party expresses dismay at the portrayal of climate change as a national security issue, calling this “the triumph of extremism over common sense”. Generally, the Republicans use accusatory descriptions of the Democratic party, arguing that their approach is “based on shoddy science, scare tactics, and centralized command-and-control regulation,” and that the party is underhandedly supported by the “environmental establishment [who] is a self-serving elite, stuck in the mindset of the 1970s, subordinating the public's consensus to the goals of the Democratic Party”. Furthermore, the manifesto uses language that undercuts the certainty of climate science: i.e., “uncertainty about natural weather and markets is a risk farmers and ranchers always face”. It also mentions that “we will not tolerate the use of bogus science and scare tactics”, and the “Democratic Party environmental extremists, who must reach farther and demand more to sustain the illusion of an environmental crisis”.

The AfD uses similar tactics to spread doubt, claiming that “the trace gas carbon dioxide (CO₂) is not a pollutant but an indispensable prerequisite for all life” and considers that “even before industrialization, there were warm and cold periods that cannot be explained by the associated CO₂ concentration in the air”. Both the AfD and the Republican Party actively oppose global institutions and international agreements, with the Republican Party calling the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change “a political mechanism, not an unbiased scientific institution,” and the AfD contending the statements of IPCC, “that climate change is predominantly man-made are not scientifically backed”. They also explicitly call for the withdrawal from the 2015 Paris Agreement, with the AfD advocating for the termination Germany to withdraw from “all state and private climate protection organizations”. In comparison, the Republican Party argues from a judicial angle that “there is no ambiguity in that language [and] it

would be illegal for the President to follow through on his intention to provide millions in funding for the UNFCCC and hundreds of millions for its Green Climate Fund”.

The use of climate denialist language by the Republican Party is predictable, given the historical trend of manufactured climate denialism in the United States, which has facilitated a strong linkage between conservative political parties and climate skepticism (Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022). In contrast, the anti-climate stance of the AfD is more noteworthy, given the absence of climate skepticism in the German context and the party's formation in 2013 (Engels et al., 2013; Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022). Selk and Kemmerzell (2022) argue that the party strategically positioned itself as anti-climate to distinguish itself from its political adversary, the Greens, and further adopted a strict anti-climate policy as one of the party's defining issues. This strategic positioning aligns with the theoretical party competition perspective put forth by Kraus (2020) and Stoknes (1999), which suggesting that political parties adopt contrasting policy positions to clearly establish themselves on 'one' side of an issue.

Both the Republican Party and the AfD support fossil fuels use, though the Republican Party takes on a more aggressive stance, strongly advocating for the coal and gas industry and arguing that the Democratic Party's energy policy on keeping energy resources in the ground “will keep jobs out of reach of those who need them most”. The Republicans contend that the Democratic Party's 'war on coal' is a misguided approach, since “coal is an abundant, clean, affordable, reliable domestic energy resource”. Republicans also blame the Democratic Party and environmental activists for damaging the economy, with the Keystone Pipeline becoming “a symbol of everything wrong with the current Administration's ideological approach [as] after years of delay, the President killed it to satisfy environmental extremists”. Energy sovereignty and economic growth are cited for the reasons why the Republicans “intend to finish pipeline and others as part of our commitment to North American energy security [and] energy exports will create high paying jobs throughout the United States, reduce our nation's trade deficit, grow our economy, and boost the energy security of our allies and trading partners”. This stands in opposition to the “Democrat's no-growth economy”.

In comparison, the AfD takes on a softer stance for pro-fossil fuel energies, with arguably a covert support for transitioning to renewable electricity. It acknowledges “the goal of the federal government is to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80 to 95 percent in 2050”. However, the party raises concerns about the extent and speed of the transition, which they believe will overstrain the

economy and citizens. The AfD further argues that the “foreseeable problems of the energy transition, such as further rising prices, endangered grid stability, increasing risk of power failures and a lack of large storage facilities, remain unresolved”. Consequently, the AfD argues that “Germany will also not be able to do so [green electricity] without the use of modern gas and coal-fired power plants in the foreseeable future”. Nonetheless, the AfD argues for an “end to the decarbonization project via the Great Transformation and repeal the German government's climate protection plan 2050”. The omission of pro- or contra- carbon tax policies similarly reflects the blurred ambiguity which might, particularly compared to the U.S. Republican Party, reflect a willingness to engage in progressive energy policies provided they do not impede fossil-fuel interests.

In contrast, the Republican Party adopts an assertive stance opposing the carbon tax by directly blaming the Democratic Party, stating that “we oppose any carbon tax [as] it would increase energy prices across the board, hitting hardest at the families who are already struggling to pay their bills in the Democrats’ no-growth economy”. Interestingly, this aligns remarkably with Australia's Liberal National Party's position, which dedicates a substantial portion of text to contest how “we will continue to fight Labor's plans to reintroduce a Carbon Tax, which would put more pressure on family budgets”. The party provides hard numbers to support their position, estimating a savings of approximately “\$550 per year” for an average household upon the reversal the carbon tax. Overall, the radical pro- or anti-carbon tax positions taken by these parties can be attributed, at least in part, to the dynamics of a two-party system's dynamics, where policy choices follow distinct political parties. In such systems, party competition and strategic positioning play a crucial role in shaping policy positions and influencing public opinion on important policy debates like the carbon tax.

The Liberal National Party in Australia demonstrates support for progressive energy policies, including ambitious targets for solar and renewable energy, as well as actively advocating for the establishment of funds to drive investments towards renewable energy through the “\$1 billion Clean Energy Innovation Fund”. The party is also the only right-wing political party among the four studied to express explicit support for international environmental agreements, acknowledging that in signing the 2015 Paris Agreement, Australia is “playing our part in the global challenge on climate change”. The party's commitment to transforming the transportation and mobility sector is nuanced under this study’s climate-change stance framework; while

advocating for the construction of multiple highways under the “Roads to Recovery” program, the party also focuses on public transportation projects, such as light-rail projects aimed at improving “access, amenity, and livability”. Distinctly, the manifesto does not mention mobility options, such as the transformation of urban spaces through walking and biking, nor is there any mention of electric vehicles. Instead, there is significant space given to urban traffic, where plans to transform the transportation infrastructure are explicitly linked to economic growth and job creation. This suggests that the Liberal National Party supports renewable energy policies only if they are low-cost, efficient, and contribute to job creation. In addition, the omission of direct references to fossil fuels, gas, diesel, or electric vehicles may be an attempt at avoiding the decarbonization debate that problematizes and questions fossil fuel industries.

The seemingly contradictory positions of the Liberal National Party on climate policy are somewhat reflected within the climate skepticism framework. While stating explicit climate progressive stances in relation to position on science, where climate change is a serious threat caused by anthropogenic emissions, and the domestic agenda addresses specific policies at reducing emissions, the party also demonstrates a reluctance towards expensive and transformational social policies. The party, as reflected in the manifesto, advocates for policies that “reduce the red tape”, create “one-stop-shop for environmental assessments”, or meet emission “targets without Labor’s Carbon Tax which made electricity more expensive for all Australian families”. In other words, policies and projects are supported only, and if, they are shown to be investments with economic or environmental growth benefits, such as projects that “include carbon farming to increase carbon in the soil, energy efficient lighting for town councils, supporting re-vegetation and bushfire reduction”. This paradoxical facet might also be explainable by the political influence of certain party members and leaders within the Liberal National Party. While this is outside of the scope of this study, previous analysis have uncovered how Liberal National Party leaders appropriated elements of populism and climate skepticism to counter the political threats and attacks from Pauline Hanson’s One Nation (Lockwood, 2018).

In Austria, the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has a similar ambivalent trajectory regarding the transformation of the transportation system. The FPÖ appears carefully exonerates gas- and diesel- vehicle owners while advocating for readjustments of the transportation system. With evasive argumentation, the FPÖ suggests that new technologies will enable the “environmentally friendly use of individual means of transport”, while “at the same time, public

transport must also be expanded”, though insisting that “drivers of diesel vehicles should not have to pay”. Strikingly, the FPÖ is very explicit against the use of fossil fuels as “fossil resources are finite [and] Austria must therefore urgently take all necessary measures to drastically reduce dependency on it”. They express vocal support for progressive energy in all forms, arguing that the use of domestic renewable forms of energy are “the safest way to attain environmental protection goals”. This might be out of a concern for national security and energy sovereignty, considering the pre-existing production of the country’s renewable energy (Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022). The application of Aklin & Mildemberger's (2020) distributive conflict theory provides an explanation for the controversy surrounding climate policies, as they involve redistributing social and economic structures (Aklin & Mildemberger, 2020). Given Austria's limited fossil resources and absence of a nuclear energy tradition, the FPÖ may be more inclined to embrace an ambitious stance on renewable energies, where distributive conflict is minimal. However, the potential distributive conflicts arising from the transformation of transportation systems, specifically for owners of gas- and diesel-powered vehicles, could lead to a cautious approach and a reluctance to take a definitive stance on this matter. It might also be used to explain FPÖ’s distinctive position on nuclear energy, as they discursively portray nuclear energy within the same framework as their anti-fossil fuel stance.

From a qualitative perspective, it is evident that the FPÖ supports climate policies under an ethno- and eco- nationalist agenda. Their argumentation for ambitious climate and environmental policies argues for the need to “strengthen sovereignty, also in energy issues and in the context of the supply of healthy food and clean water, to protect the freedom of our citizens, whose vital interests must not be allowed to become the plaything of international speculators and corporations”. The eco-nationalist dimension is not fully captured in the climate skepticism framework, where the climate progressive dimension argues for the adoption of ambitious climate policies without considering eco-nationalist reasoning. The eco-nationalist position does not focus on denying climate change, but rather emphasizes the importance of protecting the environment and promoting national interests. In the FPÖ’s discourse, the eco-heartland theme (preservation of homeland through climate mitigation) theme is vital for their argumentation for pro-climate and

environmental policies (Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022). Their advocacy for the “heimsicher energiewende”, additionally hints at the idea of far-right ecologicalism (Lubarda, 2020)¹¹.

The findings of this thesis offer a nuanced and complex depiction into how right-wing political parties adopt and reject climate policies and skepticism. In answering the second research question, the findings problematize the assumption that right-wing political parties, particularly those identified as populist, exhibit high degrees of climate skepticism, and inherently oppose climate policies. First, Lockwood’s (2018) ideological variation between two camps of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘continental European’, where skepticism is at the core issue of the former, and outright denialism of the latter is rare, is not applicable¹². Both the Republican Party (Anglo-Saxon) and the AFD (continental Europe) use climate denialist language to challenge climate science, with notable absence of explicit climate denialist language in the Australian and Austrian context.

Secondly, the research corroborates the Oswald et. al. (2021) findings which show that right-wing political parties are beginning to adopt pro-environmental and climate policy stances, defying the expectation that an inherent dichotomy exists between ‘green policies’ and ‘right-wing populism’ (Oswald et al., 2021). With the exception of the AfD party, right-wing political parties seem to be showing a tentative inclination towards adopting progressive energy policies, even during the election cycle of 2016/2017. Even the Republican Party seems to have adopted progressive energy policies in addition to fossil fuels, probably under a lingering all-of-the-above-energy policy first advocated by U.S. President Bush. This corroborates earlier research pointing towards shifts in conservative politics towards the adoption of green climate policies under ethno-nationalism by some rightwing political parties (Aronoff, 2019). The present study also finds that right-wing political parties in the four countries examined predominantly employ at least some form of economic reasoning against ambitious climate policies under the climate nationalist

¹¹ Far-right ecologism, or eco-fascism, is a loose umbrella term to describe the idea that ecological harmony is dependent upon some restructuring of human social order, often through white supremacy, anti-capitalism, apocalyptic pessimism, anti-technological, anti- modernity, or anti-humanism reasoning Lubarda, B. (2020). Beyond ecofascism? Far-Right Ecologism (FRE) as a framework for future inquiries. *Environmental Values*, 29, 713-732. <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327120X15752810323922> .

¹² This divergence might be accounted for by Lockwood’s conceptual framework of right-wing populism, which prominently incorporates a nativist component – a characteristic seemingly absent in the Liberal National Party of Australia. Under Lockwood’s (2018) conceptualization, fringe political parties like Pauline Hanson’s One Nation might be more akin to the right-wing nativist conceptualization of populism rather than the Liberal National Party. However, considering previous research into how Liberal Party National party members and leaders appropriating populism (Lockwood, 2018), and this study’s research design, the validity for this delineation is deemed relevant.

argumentation. This implies that while the ideological underpinnings of populism may be less pronounced than previously thought, the reluctance to pursue climate mitigation measures is often informed by right-wing economic arguments that prioritize cost efficiency as a prerequisite for policy adoption.

5.3 Exploring Populism and Climate Policies

The secondary objective of this study is to provide an understanding of populism and how it might relate to climate politics, keeping in mind results of the first two research inquiries in mind when exploring causal explanations. Firstly, this study indicates that right-wing parties are not more inclined to engage in populist discourse than their left-wing counterparts. Secondly, it finds that not all right-wing ‘populist’ parties espouse climate skeptic rhetoric nor inherently oppose progressive climate and environmental policies, thus highlighting the nuanced nature of this relationship. The analysis also suggests that right-wing political parties demonstrate varying degrees of acceptance toward climate policies, particularly if they are geared and framed as domestic energy security. Although this research is not exhaustive, the subsequent section outlines theoretical causal links and explores their implications.

Drawing on the preceding discussion sections, several causal theoretical explanations provide insights into the prevalence of climate skepticism and the acceptance of climate policies by right wing political parties. In examining the manifesto of Austria's FPÖ, two theoretical explanations based on the country’s renewable energy sources and lack of fossil fuel industries emerge: first, progressive energy policies are framed towards domestic energy sovereignty, highlighting an importance for national control over energy resources; secondly, ambitious energy policies are not threatening social and economic structures. Under Aklin & Mildemberger's (2020) distributive conflict theory, the lack of fossil fuel industries and existing dependence on renewable energy policies implies minimal redistribution, therefore minimizing opposition and conflict from citizens and interest groups and making it easier to advocate for ambitious climate policies. Conversely, in Australia, the country's dependence on domestic fossil fuel resources increases the likelihood for significant distributive impacts if ambitious climate and environmental policies are implemented. As a result, discussions surrounding climate in Australia often employ ambiguous language with a focus on conservation as an environmental protection effort. Despite advocating for climate change solutions, actual energy policies prioritize fossil fuel-heavy industries, such as

transportation policies, where the emphasis lies on the positive impacts on job creation and economic growth.

Given the extensive previous research on the topic, it is highly probable fossil fuel lobbyists and other anti-climate groups played a significant role in shaping the Republican Party's economic reasoning and justifications, leading to their opposition to climate change policies. Despite the Republican's claim to represent: "the party of America's growers, producers, farmers, ranchers, foresters, miners, commercial fishermen, and all those who bring from the earth the crops, minerals, energy, and the bounties of our seas that are the lifeblood of our economy", the manifesto exhibits a clear anti-climate and denialist stance. However, the party also demonstrates a cautious approval of progressive energy policies under an "all-of-the-above" approach, which argues for the adoption of all forms of energy production to ensure national energy sovereignty. In contrast, the AfD exhibits the anti-climate and denialist stance presumably not out of direct influence from interest or anti-climate groups, but rather to strategically maneuver for political competition. The AfD emerged in 2013, coinciding with the implementation of the German *Energiewende*, a pivotal legislative instrument aimed at gradually reducing the use of coal and other fossil fuels under the Renewable Energy Law. A potential explanation for the AfD's distinct anti-climate position, as proposed by Aklin and Mildemberger (2020), is to attract those who perceive themselves as "losers" in the distributive conflict inherent to ambitious climate policies like the Renewable Energy Law, particularly those impacted by domestic fossil fuel industries. Selk and Kimmerzell (2022) provide additional support to the notion that the AfD strategically positioned itself in direct opposition to the Green Party. Their analysis is consistent with theories of political party competition behavior, as discussed in Chapter 2.4, and offers valuable insights into understanding the adoption of anti-climate stances by certain political parties as a means to differentiate themselves from their competitors.

Selk and Kimmerzell (2022) put forward a theoretical framework called retrogradeism to explain the eco-nationalist argumentation that enables right-wing populist parties to integrate progressive environmental and climate policies into their agendas while simultaneously rejecting the global climate agenda. Retrogradeism combines regressive political goals with populist rhetoric, using the promise of restoring a 'golden democratic past' to appeal to those identifying as part of the 'heartland' (Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022). The authors argue that retrogradeism becomes compatible with climate mitigation policies through a discourse of eco-heartland, green

localism, and green energy sovereignty within the domestic agenda. Eco-heartland highlights the preservation of homeland and traditional ways of living through climate mitigation (found heavily used in FPÖ), while green energy sovereignty emphasizes the importance of national sovereignty by utilizing national energy sources and achieving energy independence through renewable resources. Green localism stresses the importance of promoting local small-scale businesses through climate mitigation, as a form of national and regional interest (Selk & Kemmerzell, 2022).

This approach shares similarities with the pro-regional environmental protection policy outlined by the Oswald et. a. (2021) framework, which advocates for saving the environment on the regional level as opposed to a global climate agenda. The Republican Party, FPÖ, and AfD, all heavily advocated for environmental preservation on a local scale, by citing the belief that “locals know best” and emphasizing decentralized policies. The Republican Party for example, endorsed privatization as “the best guarantee of conscientious stewardship” and the FPÖ emphasizes a “rural and decentralized agriculture”, arguing that “we want our homeland to be established as a state that is as autonomous and self-sufficient as possible in the international community of states”. This line of thinking, however, may also give rise to a far-right ecological ideology known as eco-fascism, which advocates for an idealized ecological harmony through white supremacy, anti-modernity, and anti-humanism (Campion, 2023; Lubarda, 2020). Far-right ecologism is a loosely defined term that traces its origins to the cultural backlash against Western industrialization and urbanization in Europe during the 1850s, where anti-modernity ideas merged with 19th-century nationalism (Campion, 2023; Lubarda, 2020). This ideology dovetails with Selk and Kimmerzell's (2022) notion of retrogradeism, which permits the merging of progressive domestic climate policies while simultaneously rejecting the global climate regime.

As the impacts of climate change become increasingly pronounced, it is plausible that some right-wing parties may continue to gravitate towards far-right ecological ideologies. Concurrently, the realm of climate politics may witness an upsurge in the adoption of populist communication by left-wing and green political parties as a response to the urgent need for robust climate action. This study's initial quantitative content analysis of populism and ideological positioning supports this hypothesis as it indicates that right-wing political parties do not use more populist language than their left-wing counterparts. The trend is particularly clear in Germany, where the Green Alliance party have employed more populist rhetoric than any other party, and the Left has steadily increased its use of populist communication. Similarly, in Australia, both the Labor and the

Australian Greens have exhibited more populist communication than their right-wing counterparts. This trend indicates a populist framing of the climate crisis as a struggle between ‘the people’ and fossil fuel interests or the ‘elite’. It is essential to acknowledge that the dictionary-based approach utilized in the study is reliant on specific keywords. While the green and left parties were not subjected to a rigorous qualitative content analysis, their manifestos were qualitatively read by the researcher for comparison. The analysis reveals that ‘the people’ are conceptualized much more broadly and inclusively. The ‘people’ underpin a heterogeneous group of people, rather than the narrow and exclusive conceptualization of ‘the people’ in right-wing parties.

To illustrate this fundamental distinction, the Democratic Party addresses various issues in their manifesto, such as ending systemic racism, closing the racial wealth gap, guaranteeing civil rights, and promoting LGBTQ+ rights. In contrast, the Republican Party dedicates significant space to advocating for “traditional marriage and family” based on a union between one man and one woman, criticizing the Democratic Party for “impos[ing] a social and cultural revolution upon the American people by wrongly redefining sex discrimination to include sexual orientation or other categories”. The Alternative for Germany (AfD) party incorporates similar language along with an anti-migration stance, emphasizing the preservation of the state and the German people's identity: “the aim of the AfD is self-preservation, not self-destruction our state and people [...] we want our offspring one leave behind a country that is still recognizable as our Germany”. In comparison, the German Greens prioritize supporting refugees fleeing from war and violence, promoting a society that allows freedom of belief, love, and marriage. This study suggests that populist communication remains a common rhetorical strategy and suggests its potential adoption by all parties, particularly in response to the escalating impacts of anthropogenically induced climate change.

This study encourages further examination into of how political parties employ populist communication strategies in response to the ongoing climate crisis, which poses significant threats to social and political structures, and how such rhetorical populist tactics foster a sense of unity among ‘the people’ while assigning blame to the ‘elite’. Furthermore, this thesis echoes the call from Kaltwasser (2021) to integrate political psychology and comparative politics, emphasizing the need to incorporate social-psychological theories (such as ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups and the process of ‘othering’) that perpetuate patterns of marginalization and exclusion. The study also demonstrates the need for future research to transcend the conventional left-right ideological

divide, as emphasized by Kaltwasser (2021), to consider the populist strategy as politicizing dimensions of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ across societal cleavages (Kaltwasser, 2021). For instance, the strategic positioning of the AfD against the ‘Greens’, might exemplify how populist rhetoric moves beyond traditional ideological divisions.

Kaltwasser (2021) also argues for the assessment of ‘anti-establishment political identity’ where voters develop a negative political identity towards mainstream political parties and therefore subscribe to populist communications and leaders. To do so, a qualitative assessment of populism, using holistic grading to capture the anti-establishment element, could be used and is recommended in future research. Stronger links between populism and political identities may arguably be assessed through ‘anti-establishment political identity’ as reflected by dissatisfaction with the current political system and a desire for change found across the political spectrum, rather than a specific set of policy positions (Uscinski et al., 2021). This assessment could further be strengthened if populist rhetoric is seen connected to, or disconnected from, particular policy positions (e.g., immigration, climate, taxes) or specific worldview values (e.g., emphasis on familial composition, abortion, party homogeneity) in comparison to other factors. Finally, it is worth exploring affective politics as a captivating domain for identifying populist communication. Notably, research linking specific emotions, such as humiliation discourses, to populist political mobilization might provide valuable insights (Homolar & Löffmann, 2021).

In summary, this discussion addresses the secondary objective of this thesis and contributes towards a deeper understanding of the complex dynamic between populism and climate politics. The analysis suggests that right-wing parties' acceptance of climate policies varies, prompting an exploration of various theoretical frameworks to discern the underlying nuances. Notably, the concepts of retrogradeism and distributive conflict theory are employed to illuminate these complexities. This thesis also touches upon the potential emergence of far-right ecological ideologies, given the escalating impacts of climate change and the heightened likelihood of right-wing parties gravitating towards the blend of nationalism and environmentalism. Moreover, this study suggests the possibility that left-wing and green parties adopt populist communication strategies as they strive to address the urgent imperatives of climate action. Consequently, it underscores the necessity for future research endeavors to incorporate political psychology in elucidating the mechanisms through which populist tactics foster a sense of unity among the populace while attributing blame to the elite.

6. Conclusion

This paper has challenged some of the prevailing assumptions in the field by critically examining the presumed linkage between populist discourse, ideological positioning, climate skepticism, and opposition to climate policies. Through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis, this research has endeavored to explore and untangle the interconnections behind these concepts in diverse cross-cultural contexts. The quantitative content analysis conducted on political party manifestos did not yield consistent evidence to support a correlation between populist rhetoric and left – right ideological positions. However, it is imperative to highlight that these findings are dependent upon the accuracy of the CMP/MARPOR database and subsequent R code packages. Nonetheless, the findings indicate that the right-wing political parties do not employ more populist language than their left and green party counterparts. While green parties seemingly employ more populist rhetoric in their political party manifestos, it is vital to acknowledge that the conceptualization of the ‘people’ by left and green parties encompasses a wider and more inclusive spectrum of individuals, in stark contrast to the narrower and highly nationalist conceptualization observed in right-wing parties.

This study has also revealed a nuanced relationship in terms of the prevalence of climate skepticism in right-wing parties and their stance on climate issues. It indicates that not all right-wing ‘populist’ parties adhere to climate skeptic rhetoric, nor do they inherently oppose progressive climate and environmental policies, particularly for the Austrian FPÖ party. Instead, right-wing political parties exhibit varying degrees of acceptance of climate policies, particularly when framed within the context of domestic energy security. This analysis also challenges the categorization proposed by Lockwood (2018), which posits an ideological distinction between ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘continental European’ camps, as both the Republican Party and the AfD employ climate denialist language despite belonging to different ideological categorizations. The Republican and AfD do employ significant climate denialist language in their political manifestos, often by blaming their strategic opposition as elitist. The study also reveals that right-wing parties often employ economic reasoning to oppose ambitious climate policies, emphasizing cost efficiency and national security as prerequisites for policy adoption. While the ideological underpinnings of populism may be less pronounced than previously assumed, the resistance for ambitious climate mitigation measures might be more rooted in economic argumentation than

ideological opposition. It highlights supports for the idea that distributive conflict, as identified by Aklin & Mildemberger (2020), might play more of an important role than ideological firmness. Furthermore, the findings support the research of Oswald et al.'s (2021) research, which suggests that right-wing parties are increasingly embracing pro-environmental and climate policy stances, thereby challenging the presumed dichotomy between 'green policies' and 'right-wing populism'.

While this research provides valuable insights, it should be noted that it is not exhaustive, and further studies are warranted. Qualitative content analysis and interdisciplinary approaches can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of populism as a communication strategy, incorporating perspectives from social psychology, affective politics, and political identities. Exploring the relationship between populism and political polarization, as well as examining specific policy positions and worldviews associated with populist rhetoric, can further enhance our comprehension of this multifaceted phenomenon. In conclusion, this thesis emphasizes the importance of nuanced interpretations of populist rhetoric in political party manifestos, challenges prevailing assumptions regarding the prevalence of populism over time, and sheds light on the intricate relationship between right-wing parties, populism, and climate policies. It also highlights that the climate crisis provides fertile ground for common populist rhetorical strategies, enabling the 'othering' of a perceived corrupt elite. Moreover, if the climate crisis is a distributive crisis, it is reasonable to expect increased populist rhetoric on both sides of the ideological spectrum.

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Appendix

Appendix A : Left–Right Ideological Positioning

Figure A1

Measuring Left- Right Ideological Positioning in the United States

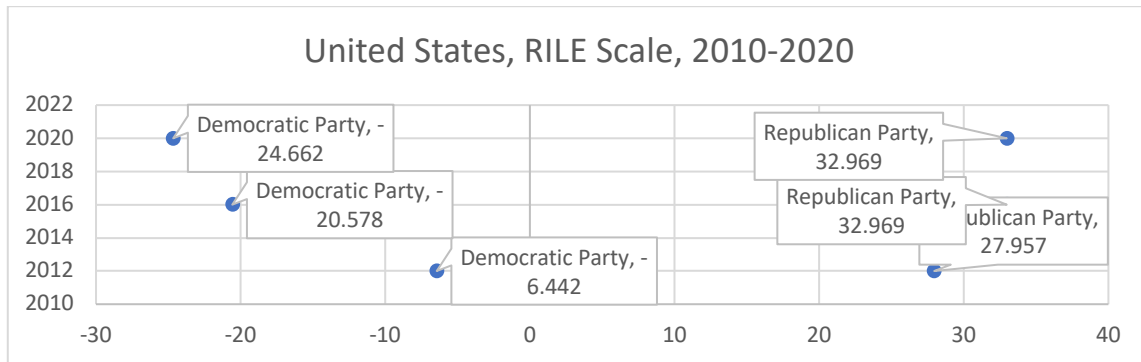


Figure 6: Electoral manifestos scored based on number of ‘left’ and ‘right’ coded policy positions across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained. Positive scores relate to higher number of ‘right’ coded policy positives; negative scores relate to a higher number of ‘left’ coded policy positions.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer · Source: CMP/MARPOR database

Figure A2

Measuring Left- Right Ideological Positioning in Germany

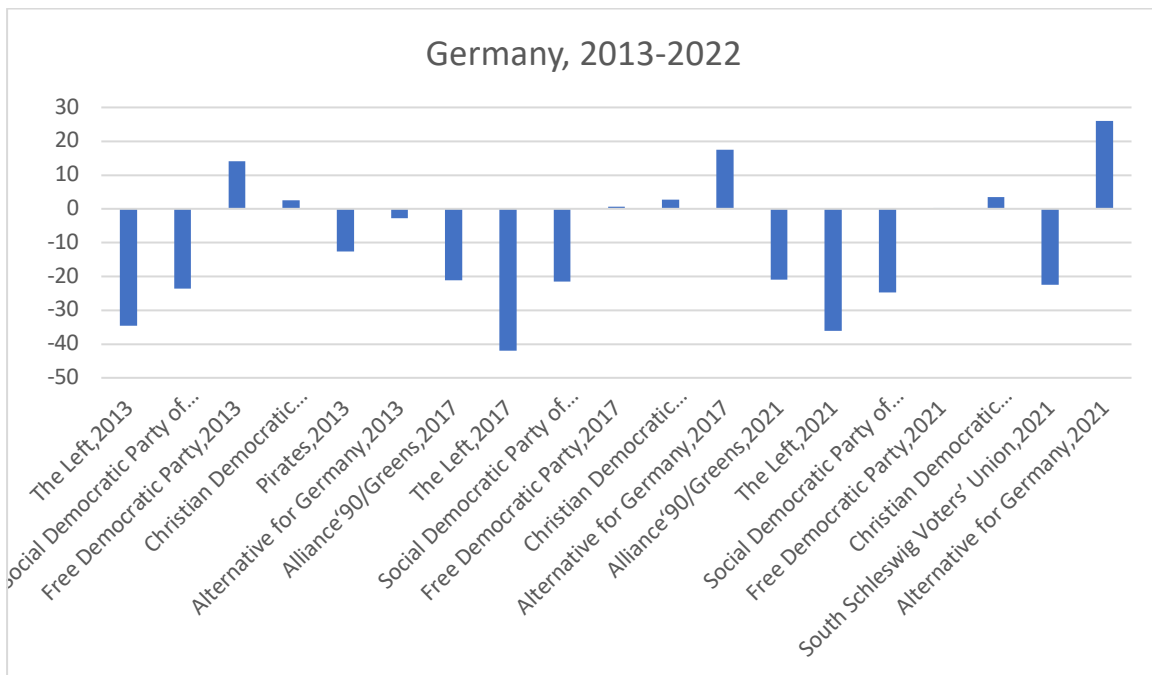


Figure 7: Electoral manifestos scored based on number of ‘left’ and ‘right’ coded policy positions across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained. Positive scores relate to higher number of ‘right’ coded policy positives; negative scores relate to a higher number of ‘left’ coded policy positions.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer · Source: CMP/MARPOR database

Figure A3

Measuring Left- Right Ideological Positioning in Austria

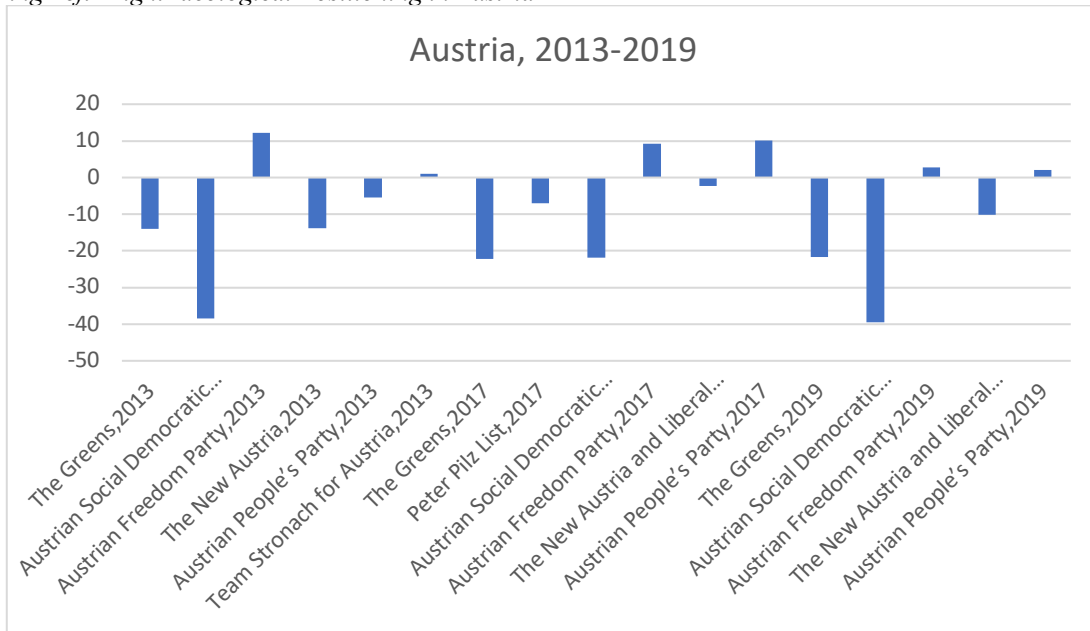


Figure 8: Electoral manifestos scored based on number of 'left' and 'right' coded policy positions across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained. Positive scores relate to higher number of 'right' coded policy positives; negative scores relate to a higher number of 'left' coded policy positions.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer · Source: CMP/MARPOR database

Figure A4

Measuring Left- Right Ideological Positioning in Australia

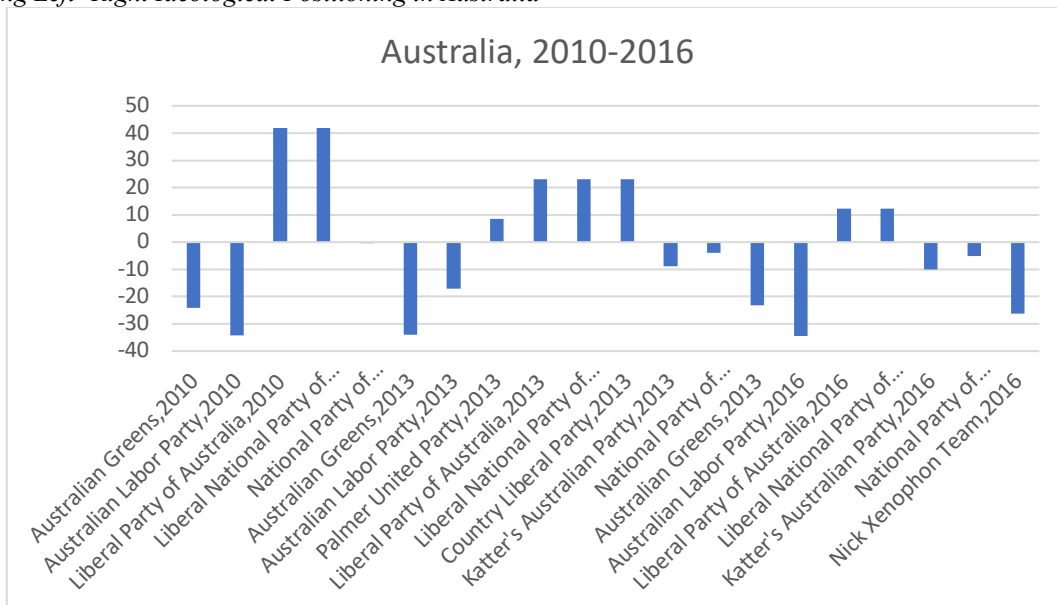


Figure 9: Electoral manifestos scored based on number of 'left' and 'right' coded policy positions across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained. Positive scores relate to higher number of 'right' coded policy positives; negative scores relate to a higher number of 'left' coded policy positions.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer · Source: CMP/MARPOR database

Appendix B: Dictionary-Based Measurement

Figure B1

Dictionary-Based Measurement of Populism in the United States

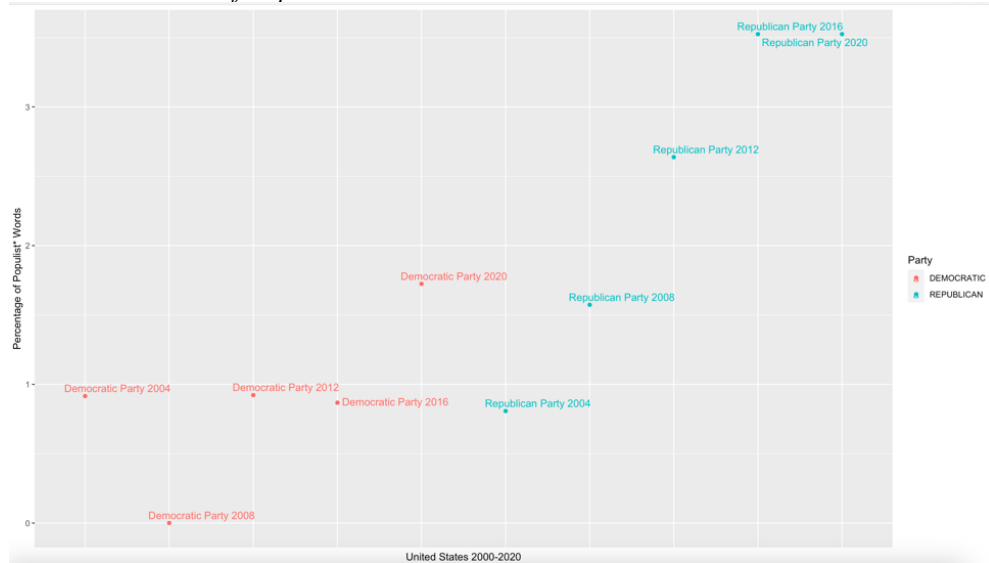


Figure 10: Percentage of populist rhetoric measured across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer

Figure B2

Dictionary-Based Measurement of Populism in Germany

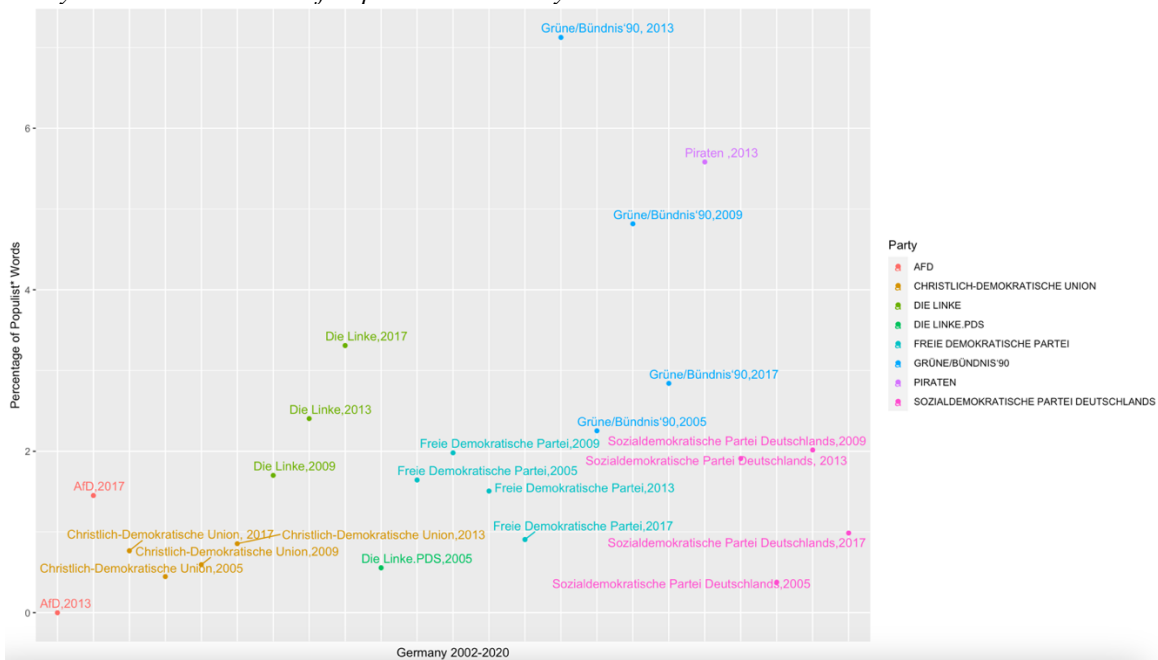


Figure 10: Percentage of populist rhetoric measured across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained.

Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer

Figure B3
Dictionary-Based Measurement of Populism in Australia

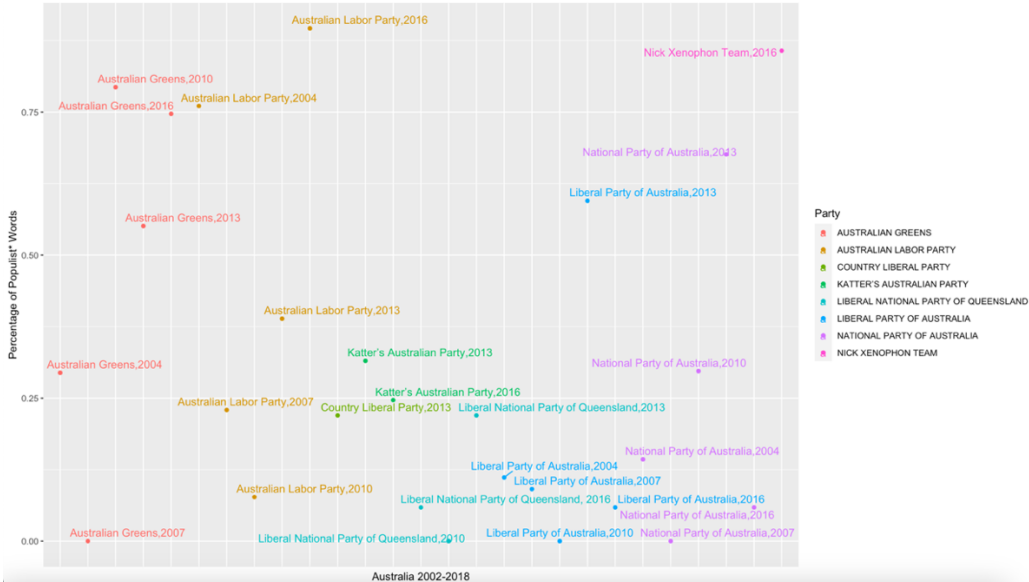


Figure 12: Percentage of populist rhetoric measured across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained.
 Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer

Figure B4
Dictionary-Based Measurement of Populism in Austria

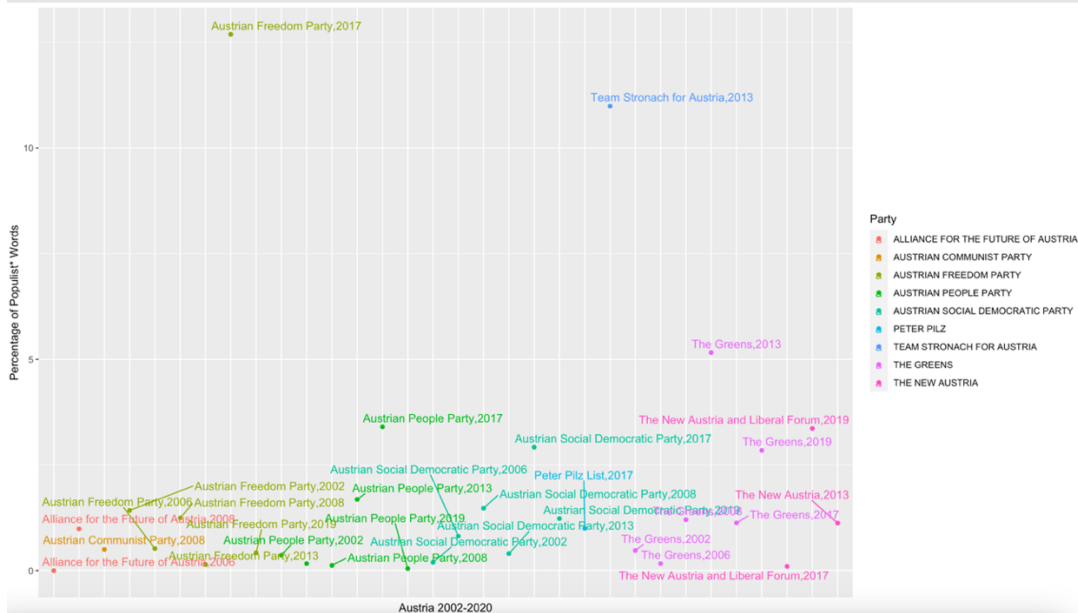


Figure 13: Percentage of populist rhetoric measured across political parties with at least one parliamentary seat gained.
 Chart: Zadekia Krondorfer



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