

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

POPULISM

IN NATIONAL AND GLOBAL MEDIA

24-25 November 2023

Vilnius University, Theatre Hall and Library, Room 238
(Universiteto str. 3, Vilnius)

Organized by



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*Journal of Studies in Eastern
European Cinema* (Taylor and
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Organizer

Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University

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Dear Conference Delegates,

We cordially welcome you to the “Populism in National and Global Media” Conference, hosted by the Faculty of Communication, Vilnius University!

The theme of the Conference – populism in local and global media – appeared naturally from the insightful observation of the rise of nationalist political discourses in media, citizens’ protests, and their views expression on social media, associated with major political events and campaigns – the COVID-19 pandemic, Russia’s war in Ukraine, and the dramatic economic setback in recent years. This situation was well exploited by a range of actors (media professionals, politicians, influencers, and celebrities) in their populist communication and rhetoric across different media channels.

In the light of all these constellations and challenges in Europe and worldwide, an idea evolved to summon media scholars and practitioners to discuss the nexus between populism, politics, communication, media, and wider society. Thus, we were pleased to receive numerous insightful proposals by media and communication scholars from Lithuania and abroad. We hope that the rich Conference programme will offer inspiring and fruitful scholarly discussions and exchanges.

The program proposes 3 keynote panels, 9 paper panels and 1 roundtable discussion, and will accommodate 43 scholars with 35 conference papers. Our wonderful keynote speakers – Prof. Dr Agnieszka Stępińska, Prof. Dr Ewa Mazierska, and Prof. Dr Susana Salgado – will introduce different perspectives on populism in media. We hope that the Conference participants and guests will find it informative and engaging.

I express my gratitude to the Dean of the Faculty of Communication Prof. Dr Renata Matkevičienė and the Vice-Dean for Science of the Faculty of Communication Prof. Dr Arūnas Gudinaičius for providing multiple support for this event as well as local organizing team – Agnė Zumbrickaitė, Raminta Labanauskienė, Kristina Gedvilaitė, Skirmantė Granickienė, Dr Renata Stonytė and Greta Tamulionienė – for making this Conference possible.

I would like to thank Indrė Makaraitytė, Zsolt Győri, Dr Renata Matkevičienė, Dr Mantas Martišius, Dr Andrius Gudauskas, Dr Deimantas Jastramskis, Dr Vincas Grigas, Dr Džina Donauskaitė, Dr Renata Stonytė, Dr Viktor Denisenko, Magnus Tomas Kėvišas, and Liutauras Ulevičius for moderating the panels and roundtable discussion!

We sincerely thank our sponsors and partners: Lithuanian National Radio and Television; Vilnius University Science Support Fund; Faculty of Communication (Vilnius University); and Research Council of Lithuania.

We look forward to meeting you in the Conference
and hope you will have enjoyable time in Vilnius!

Assoc. Prof. Dr Renata Šukaitytė,

The Chair of the Conference Scientific Committee
and the Local Organizing Team

Schedule of Events at a Glance

24 November (Friday)

- 9.00–9.30 **Registration** (Theatre Hall)
- 10.00–11.00 **Keynote Session 1** (Theatre Hall): Agnieszka Stępińska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)
- 11.15–12.45 **Panel Session 1** (Theatre Hall): Populism, Polarization and Media Literacy
- 11.15–12.45 **Panel Session 2** (Library, Room 238): Media, Politics, Populism
- 12.45–14.15 **Lunch break** (optional, Grey (Pilies str. 2))
- 14.15–15.15 **Keynote Session 2** (Theatre Hall): Ewa Mazierska (University of Central Lancashire, UK / University of Gdansk, Poland)
- 15.30–17.00 **Panel Session 3** (Theatre Hall): Populist Discourse in Eastern European Audiovisual and Social Media
- 15.30–17.00 **Panel Session 4** (Library, Room 238): Populism in Digital and Mass Culture
- 17.15–18.15 **Roundtable Discussion** (Theatre Hall): Lithuanian Journalists' Responses to Populism
- 18.15–19.30 **Reception** (Theatre Hall)

25 November (Saturday)

- 9.00–9.30 **Registration** (Theatre Hall)
- 9.30–10.45 **Panel Session 5** (Theatre Hall): Populism in Contemporary Hungarian Cinema: Historical, Generic, Comparative and Transnational Contexts
- 9.30–10.45 **Panel Session 6** (Library, Room 238): Politics and Populism in Film and TV
- 11.00–12.00 **Keynote Session 3** (Theatre Hall): Susana Salgado (University of Lisbon, Portugal), Populism and Denialism: Studying Interconnections and Processes
- 12.00–13.30 **Lunch Break** (optional, Bernelių užėiga (Pilies str. 10))
- 13.30–15.00 **Panel Session 7** (Theatre Hall): Political Populism During Times of Crisis
- 13.30–15.00 **Panel Session 8** (Library, Room 238): Populist Leaders and Politicians
- 15.15–16.30 **Panel Session 9** (Theatre Hall): Populism During Elections and Sport Events
- 16.30–17.00 **Concluding Remarks** (Theatre Hall)
- 18.30–20.30 **Dinner** (optional, "Grey", Pilies str. 2)

Keynote Papers and Presenters

Keynote Session 1 (November 24, 10.00–11.00, Theatre Hall)

POPULISM BY, THROUGH, AND ACCORDING TO THE MEDIA

Prof. Dr. Agnieszka Stępińska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland)

While studying the media coverage of the populist actors, one may employ a concept of the media populism. The term media populism lends itself to three perspectives: populism by the media, populism through the media, and populist citizen journalism (Esser, Stępińska, and Hopmann, 2017). Populism by the media refers to media organizations actively engaging in their own kind of populism, while populism through the media occurs when the media report on the political actors' slogans, arguments, and ideological perspectives. The former may be an outcome of journalistic ideology that states that journalists should act as independent controllers of the elites in power (watchdog role) and serve the society by representing citizens' needs and demands (civic role) [Mellado, 2015], or an indicator of the „sweeping popularization” of news coverage due to highly commercialized media production that yields to general popular tastes (Mazzoleni, 2008: 50–51). The latter assumes that congruence between media logic and political populism is stylistic but not ideological: the media may be more likely to be receptive to populist rhetoric due to its high news value, than to be actively engaged in populism themselves. Hence the media support can exist even without conscious intention.

In the media systems with a high level of political pluralism, journalists – due to their political preferences – may express either support or reservations about populist actors. Furthermore, in the media systems with a strong tradition of journalistic interventionism, like the Polish one (Stępińska, et al., 2016), journalists are eager to share their opinions and interpretations. The official distancing (or praising) may be embodied in commentaries, editorials, interviews, and news stories. Hence, it is worth studying which political actors are perceived by journalists as populist and how populism is conceptualized by journalists.



Agnieszka Stępińska, PhD hab., is Professor at the Faculty of Political Science and Journalism at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. Her main areas of research are political communication and journalism studies. She participated in several international research projects, including “Foreign News on TV” (2009–2013) and “Global Journalist of the 21st Century” (2012). She led a research group studying “Media Coverage of the Polish EU Presidency” (2010–2013), and led another team contributing to the international project “Journalistic Role Performance around the Globe” (2012–2015). She acted as a vice-chair of work group 2 in COST Action IS1308 on “Populist Political Communication in Europe” (2014–2018).

Currently, she is involved in the NORFACE project: "THREATPIE: The Threats and Potentials of a Changing Political Information Environment" (2020–2023). She leads a national team working on populist political communication in Poland and another one contributing to "Journalistic Role Performance" project (2019–2022). She acts as a chair of WG1 in COST Action CA21129 – "What are Opinions? Integrating Theory and Methods for Automatically Analyzing Opinionated Communication" (2022–2026). She is a member of the Network of European Political Communication Scholars (NEPOCS). She serves as an executive editor of the Central European Journal of Communication and a member of the editorial board of the Central European Political Studies.

<http://agnieszkastepinska.pl/en/>



Keynote Session 2 (November 24, 14.15–15.15, Theatre Hall)

THE MEANDERS OF POPULISM IN POLISH CINEMA

Prof. Dr. Ewa Mazierska (The University of Central Lancashire, UK)

The term populism typically refers to a political position that contrasts 'the people' to 'the elite', presenting the former as a morally good force and the latter as selfish and corrupt. It is thus frequently associated with an anti-establishment position. From this perspective, Polish oppositional cinema of the period of state socialism, as encapsulated by *Człowiek z marmuru* (Man of Iron, 1981) by Andrzej Wajda, can be described as populist, as it pitted the people, united in the Solidarity movement, against the corrupt, weak and declining communist government.

The fall of the Iron Wall and the introduction of the parliamentary democracy resulted in the legitimisation of the government, which started to represent the people (or at least the majority of those who take part in the elections) and fragmentation of the 'people' into fractions representing competing political interests. By the same token, there is no more place for the old-style populism in Polish politics and its cinema. Instead, recently we observe political divisions along the lines: populism and anti-populism, with the former associated with the uneducated and conservative masses and the latter with the progressive, yet marginalised minorities. Such films became the domain of cinema made by women with feminist leanings, especially Małgorzata Szumowska (*W imię...*, 2013, *Body/ciało*, 2015), *Córka boga*, 2019), as well as *Dziki róża* (Wild Roses, 2017) by Anna Jadowska and *Pokot* (Spoor, 2017) by Agnieszka Holland and Kasia Adamik. The main object of criticism in these films is the Catholic Church in Poland and people living in the province who follow its instruction, implicitly positioning oneself on the side of the (educated) elite. In my talk I will analyse the rhetoric used in *Man of Iron* and the new wave of Polish women's films, pointing to their simplified depiction of the enemy. I will also compare Polish films with other films, described as populist, such as some Italian films and French romantic comedies.

References:

- Fantoni, Gianluca, Marco Paoli and Armando Rotondi (2022). 'Representations of 'Italian populism' in film', *Modern Italy*, 27, pp. 49–60.
- Harrod, Mary "Money Can't Buy Me Love": Radical Right-Wing Populism in French Romantic Comedies of the 2010s' (2020), *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 1, pp. 101–18.
- Kornacki, Krzysztof (2021). 'Protest kobiet. Wizerunek katolicyzmu w twórczości współczesnych polskich reżyserów', *Images*, 39, pp. 157–182.



Ewa Mazierska is Professor of Film Studies at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. She published over thirty monographs and edited collections on film and popular music, including *Popular Polish Electronic Music, 1970–2020: Cultural History* (Routledge, 2021), *Polish Popular Music on Screen* (Palgrave, 2021) and *Poland Daily: Economy, Work, Consumption and Social Class in Polish Cinema* (Berghahn, 2017). She is the principal editor of *Studies in Eastern European Cinema*. Her work was translated to over 20 languages.

<https://www.uclan.ac.uk/academics/ewa-mazierska>

Keynote Session 3 (November 25, 11.00–12.00, Theatre Hall)

POPULISM AND DENIALISM: STUDYING INTERCONNECTIONS AND PROCESSES

Prof. Dr. Susana Salgado (University of Lisbon, Portugal)

This presentation connects to ongoing research on denialism and populism (project Matrix funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology, reference PTDC/CPO-CPO/4361/2021). It addresses the links between populist and denialist attitudes both theoretically and empirically. Drawing on the results of representative surveys applied in Portugal, Spain, and the UK and using as examples the covid-19 pandemic crisis and climate change, the analysis focuses on whether, how and when correlations between these attitudes occur; and how levels of trust and disinformation impact on them. Specifically, proneness to uncritically engage in conspiracy thinking and accept disinformation in general, and the levels of trust towards different kinds of institutions responsible for creating and disseminating relevant information are examined in relation to populism.



Susana Salgado (PhD, 2007) is a political communication scholar, currently Principal Research Fellow at the Instituto de Ciências Sociais – Universidade de Lisboa and PI of funded research projects, including 'Depictions and Politicization of the Truth in Democratic Politics' (2020.04070.CEECIND/CP1615/CT0007). She coordinates research projects, teaches, and publishes on topics, such as democracy, populism, disinformation, hate and online extremism, and political polarization.

<https://www.ics.ulisboa.pt/pessoa/susana-salgado>

Detailed Programme

Day 1: 24 November (Friday)

9.00–9.30 **Registration** (Theatre Hall)

9.30–10.00 **Welcome** (Theatre Hall). Renata Matkevičienė (Vilnius University),
Renata Šukaitytė (Vilnius University)

10.00–11.00 **Keynote Session 1** (Theatre Hall):
Agnieszka Stępińska (Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland), **Populism
By, Through, and According to the Media**
Chair: Mantas Martišius (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

11.00–11.15 **Break**

11.15–12.45 **Panel Session 1** (Theatre Hall): **Populism, Polarization and Media Literacy**
Chair: Andrius Gudauskas (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Ignas Kalpokas (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania), How to Be Less Nostalgic than the
Populists Are: Going beyond Binary Thinking in Communication Research

Stasys Stirbinskas (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania), Are the Failings of Meritocracy
Strengthening the Appeal of Authoritarian Populism?

Mantas Martišius (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Populism and Name Calling: When is it Pure
Populism, and When is it a Component of Political Propaganda?

Auksė Balčytienė, Jūratė Imbrasaitė (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania), Can Media
Literacy Reduce Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories?

11.15–12.45 **Panel Session 2** (Library, Room 238): **Media, Politics, Populism**
Chair: Deimantas Jastramskis (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Juha Herkman (University of Helsinki, Finland), Meanings of 'Populism' and the Radical Right
in Finnish and Swedish Media

Katarzyna du Vall (Jagiellonian University, Poland), **Izabela Korbiel**, (University of Vienna, Austria),
Toward Populist Spectacle: The Role of the Media Regulator in (Re)Shaping Media
Policy in Poland

Džina Donauskaitė (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Populist Discourses about Journalism in
Lithuania: Sources, Channels, and Messages

Magnus Tomas Kėvišas, Andrius Vaišnys (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Populism in
Local vs. National News Media: Dissimilarities due to Different Readership Feedback
Practices

12.45–14.15 **Lunch break**

14.15–15.15 **Keynote Session 2** (Theatre Hall):

Ewa Mazierska (University of Central Lancashire, UK / University of Gdansk, Poland), **The Meanders of Populism in Polish Cinema**

Chair: Renata Šukaitytė (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

15.15–15.30 **Break**

15.30–17.00 **Panel Session 3** (Theatre Hall): **Populist Discourse in Eastern European Audiovisual and Social Media**

Chair: Džina Donauskaitė (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Veronika Hermann (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary), Global Formats and Local Politics in Contemporary Eastern European Television Series

Tomas Vaitelė (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Particularity of Populism in the Soviet Lithuanian Television Content: Enemies, Heroes and Interpretations of the Past

Ana Țăranu (Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania), Aesthetic Populism. The Resurgence of Cultural Nativism Across East Central Europe

15.30–17.00 **Panel Session 4** (Library, Room 238): **Populism in Digital and Mass Culture**

Chair: Vincas Grigas (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Jūratė Černevičiūtė (VilniusTech; Vilnius Academy of Art, Lithuania), Resistance through Media Consumption: A Study of Popular Culture

Costis Dallas, Rimvydas Laužikas (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Memory Practices in the Matrix: Investigating the Use of ChatGPT to Analyze and Produce Speculative SNS Conversations on Lithuanian Contested Heritage

Robert Riter (The University of Alabama, USA), Documenting and Archiving Populism: Implications for Archival Methods

Virág Vécsey (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary), #Climatehoax – Untangling the Web of Conspiracy Theories on Instagram

17.00–17.15 **Break**

17.15–18.15 **Perspectives on Populism in Lithuanian Journalism**

Chair: Indrė Makaraitytė (Lithuanian National Radio and Television)

Participating journalists: Rolandas Agintas (Verslo žinios), Vytautas Bruveris (ELTA); Jūratė Damulytė (15min); Eglė Račkauskaitė (LNK), Liepa Želnienė (LRT)

End of Day 1

Day 2: 25 November (Saturday)

9.00–9.30 **Registration** (Theatre Hall)

9.30–10.45 **Panel Session 5** (Theatre Hall): **Populism in Contemporary Hungarian Cinema: Historical, Generic, Comparative and Transnational Contexts**
Chair: Zsolt Győri (University of Debrecen, Hungary)

Zsolt Győri (University of Debrecen, Hungary), Populism and the Heroic Historical Film in Contemporary Hungarian Cinema

Györgyi Vajdovich (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary), Reiterated Populism Reiterated, Recurring Topics

Balázs Varga (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary), Conspiracy against Conspiracy

9.30–10.45 **Panel Session 6** (Library, Room 238): **Politics and Populism in Film and TV**
Chair: Renata Stonytė (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Lars Kristensen (University of Skövde, Sweden), The Yellow Banana: Populist Discourse in Danish Film and Television

Mikołaj Kunicki (Ithaca College London Center, UK), Chased by History: The Cinematic Projections of Populist Politics in Contemporary Poland

Renata Šukaitytė (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Populist Narrative Tropes in Emilis Vėlyvis's Thrillers Zero 3 (2017) and The Generation of Evil (2022)

10.45–11.00 **Break**

11.00–12.00 **Keynote Session 3** (Theatre Hall): **Susana Salgado** (University of Lisbon, Portugal), **Populism and Denialism: Studying Interconnections and Processes**
Chair: Renata Matkevičienė (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

12.00–13.30 **Lunch Break**

13.30–15.00 **Panel Session 7** (Theatre Hall): **Political Populism During Times of Crisis**
Chair: Viktor Denisenko (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Jon Järvinieniemi (University of Helsinki, Finland), Populist Communication During Times of Crisis across Party Lines

Tiago Lapa (Charles University, Czech Republic), The Iberian Far-right Populists and Immigration: An Analysis of Chega and VOX

Renata Matkevičienė (Vilnius University, Lithuania), Personal Branding in Populist Communication: Case Study of Campaign on Anti-Covid Regulations in Lithuania

Nina Zrazhevskia (Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine), Populism in the Media During the Russian Aggression against Ukraine (online)

13.30–15.00 Panel Session 8 (Library, Room 238): **Populist Leaders and Politicians**

Chair: Magnus Tomas Kėvišas (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Jan Křovák, Anna Shavit, Marcela Konrádová (Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic), Populist Leadership in the Czech Republic through Media Framing Perspective

Szilvi Német (Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary), Deceptive Accounts and Forced Memes: How Populism is Enacted on Facebook in Orbán's Hungary

Giedrė Vaičekauskienė (Vilnius University, Lithuania), How Populist Rhetoric Creates Uniform Dramatical Images: The Case of Lithuanian Political Leaders on Facebook

Liutauras Ulevičius (Vilniaus University, Lithuania), Populists in the Lithuanian Parliament: Major Narratives in 2020–2023

15.00–15.15 Break

15.15–16.30 Panel Session 9 (Theatre Hall): **Populism During Elections and Sport Events**

Chair: Liutauras Ulevičius (Vilnius University, Lithuania)

Juha Herkman (University of Helsinki, Finland), European Public Sphere, Populism and Twitter in the 2019 EP Elections

Audris Narbutas (Kaunas University of Technology), How Efficient and Common is Populism in Direct Election of Mayors?

Remzie Shahini Hoxhaj (University of Prishtina, Kosovo), **Jeta Abazi** (University of Prishtina, Kosovo), Football and National Identity. 'Us' and 'they' in the Swiss National Team

16.30–17.00 Concluding Remarks (Theatre Hall)

End of the Conference

Panel Session 1. Populism, Polarization and Media Literacy

HOW TO BE LESS NOSTALGIC THAN THE POPULISTS ARE: GOING BEYOND BINARY THINKING IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ignas Kalpokas, Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania)

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Abstract

While there are notable differences among the mainstream accounts of post-truth politics and broader diagnoses of a post-truth 'condition', most of them share one notable feature: a pessimist, sometimes even dystopian, view of today's world. Contemporary society, it is often alleged, suffers from an inability to separate truth from fiction and is easily misled by populist politicians. Much of the blame is also directed towards social media platforms and digital technologies more broadly conceived for allegedly leading publics astray. In fact, even the term itself rather tellingly signifies a nostalgic attitude of better times (of purified 'truth', 'rationality' etc.) that have been almost irrevocably lost. In that sense, discussions of post-truth often bear more than a surface resemblance to their favourite objects of criticism: Trump ('Make America Great Again') or Brexit ('Take Back Control'). Against such a nostalgic attitude, this paper aims to construe post-truth not as a disease but as a symptom of normality. After all, what such dominant accounts of post-truth are nostalgic about is an exalted version of the core humanist pillar – the Cartesian mind-body dualism and its primacy of abstract disembodied reason that is capable of rational considerations in an empty space devoid of any influence. Post-truth, meanwhile, testifies to a different, embodied, embedded, and relational model of knowledge, whereby the flows and cognition of information are dependent on communication infrastructures, the tides and ebbs of affect, bodily functions, such as the release of stress or pleasure hormones, aspects of human psychology, inter-human interaction etc. Instead of positing humans as independent and self-sufficient political agents, such an anti-humanist stance reframes the human as a mere malleable node, not the locus but an intersection of information processing.

Biography of the presenter

IGNAS KALPOKAS is Associate Professor and Head of MA Future Media and Journalism at the Department of Public Communication, Vytautas Magnus University. His main research interests include the social and political impact of new and emerging digital technologies, political communication and disinformation, and media theory broadly conceived, with a particular focus on posthumanist approaches. He has authored or co-authored six book and over 30 journal articles and book chapters on these topics. He is also member of the Young Scientists Academy of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

ARE THE FAILINGS OF MERITOCRACY STRENGTHENING THE APPEAL OF AUTHORITARIAN POPULISM?

Stasys Stirbinskas (PhD student), Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania)

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Abstract

Meritocracy is an open social system in which a person's social position is determined by their merits which are often associated with possessing individual talent and having the propensity to work hard (McNamee and Miller, 2009). In the second half of the 20th century, meritocracy transformed from a heavily criticized and dystopian arrangement into a positive and desirable system attached to the neoliberal ideology (Littler, 2018). In recent years, there has been an increasing number of works criticizing meritocracy by emphasizing not only the unfulfilled promises of this system which turns it into nothing more than an ideology that consolidates inequalities (Bloodworth, 2016; Littler, 2018; Mijs and Savage, 2020), but also by examining the connection between the rejection of meritocracy and the support for populist movements (Bukodi and Goldthorpe, 2022; Markovits, 2019; Sandel, 2020). This report aims to reveal the specifics of this connection as well as to propose a possible explanation as to why these movements can often exemplify not only populist but also authoritarian characteristics. The report argues that the adaptation of the meritocratic logic meant that people in the lower layers of society could only explain their undesirable position with one of two arguments: either the imperfection of meritocratic mechanisms, or their own lack of merit (Sandel, 2020). The report further argues that both of these positions can lead (or have already led) to the proliferation of populism. Since the neoliberal meritocratic order has reduced the concept of merit to solely economic variables, it has potentially undermined all other spheres of human existence, including the nurturing and support of democratic values (Brown, 2016; Young, 1998). Since democracy is not necessary for the survival of neoliberalism (Brown, 2016) or meritocracy, this weakening, together with the unfulfilled promises of the meritocratic system, creates an extremely favorable space for the spread of authoritarian populism.

Biography of the presenter

STASYS STIRBINSKAS is a PhD student at the Department of Sociology, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania. His research interests include meritocracy, neoliberalism, and drug control policy. The preliminary topic of his doctoral thesis is *The Concept of Meritocracy and the Specifics of its Implementation in Lithuania*. His most recent accepted publication in a peer-reviewed journal is titled *The Evolution of Meritocracy: Changes in Discourse and Functioning*, and will appear in the upcoming issue of *Culture and Society: Journal of Social Research*.

POPULISM AND NAME CALLING: WHEN IS IT PURE POPULISM, AND WHEN IS IT A COMPONENT OF POLITICAL PROPAGANDA?

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mantas Martišius, Vilnius University, Faculty of Communication (Lithuania)

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Abstract

Panel proposal: It is a common phenomenon in the media and political communication to accuse one's opponents of populism and pandering to the masses. Propaganda uses the labeling technique, which often attaches negative connotations to opponents. Populism is one of them. It is enough to label someone a populist, and information provided by such a politician, person or media outlet is evaluated with great skepticism. Anything positive is no longer delved into. On top of that, any message originating from this source is framed as a populist effort to please the masses. On the other hand, in the absence of critical evaluation, one can drown in populist promises. A decrease in the importance of traditional media means that it is possible to present many proposals that are interesting at a first glance to the public space. However, they cannot be implemented due to lack of resources or some other reasons. They are provided to please the masses, yet not to be realized. The purpose of the report is to discuss the intersection and overlap of populism and propaganda through the propaganda theory, while taking into account the context of culture wars. We may wonder how we can define populism and label it at a theoretical level. As the traditional media has been receding in popularity and ceding the primary source of public news to social causes, this issue becomes particularly relevant. In society, in politics, and even in the media, there is a competition between alternative 'truths'. There is 'your' point of view and the facts you present, and there is 'our' point of view and the facts we deliver. In this context, everything is relative. There is no longer an opportunity for a constructive public dialogue. Finding the difference between populism and labeling, at least on a theoretical level, could further construct the path of high-quality public communication.

Biography of the presenter

The field of the scientific interests of Assoc. Prof. Mantas Martišius is information warfare and propaganda. The author is denoted by experience in both academic and media regulatory work.

CAN MEDIA LITERACY REDUCE BELIEFS IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES?

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Abstract

Social media enormously influences public opinion and election outcomes. The proliferation of false information and conspiracy theories on social media may cause affective polarization of the audience concerning social issues and public policies. Based on European Social Survey (2020) and Media & News Survey (2022), the paper examines the indicators that have an impact on beliefs in conspiracy theories and considers media literacy as a possible solution to mitigate conspiratorial beliefs in the context of Lithuania and Finland. The findings show that individuals with higher levels of interpersonal trust, external efficacy, and evaluations of the benefits of online communication are less likely to believe in conspiracy theories. However, there is a difference between Lithuania and Finland in relation to values of equality and social media consumption and the endorsement of conspiracy theories. The findings indicate that improved media literacy may be a part of a strategy to mitigate conspiratorial beliefs, but different approaches are necessary to deal with various groups.

Biography of the presenters

AUKŠĖ BALČYTIENĖ (<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3358-7912>) is a professor of Journalism and Communication at the Department of Public Communications of VMU and Co-Chair of the UNESCO Chair on MIL for Inclusive Knowledge Societies. She co-founded the Baltic Research Foundation for Digital Resilience (<http://digires.lt>). Her research includes digital transformations, media policy and governance, media culture, media and information literacy, digital resilience, media activism, European Public Sphere, and East European Studies.

JŪRATĖ IMBRASAITĖ (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7761-3726>) is an associate professor of Sociology at the Department of Sociology of VMU. Her research interests include democracy, citizen participation, political culture, citizenship, and social media.

Panel Session 2. Media, Politics, Populism

MEANINGS OF 'POPULISM' AND THE RADICAL RIGHT IN FINNISH AND SWEDISH

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Abstract

Populism has become a focal point of politics in the 21st century, nominated as 'the word of the year' by Cambridge Dictionary in 2016. However, a new line of research analyses the term as a 'floating signifier': i.e., a word whose meanings have not crystallized and which are subject to constant discursive struggle. In this study, we examine how populism was covered and discussed in daily newspapers during the first two decades of the 21st century in Finland and Sweden. Despite their systemic similarities, Finland and Sweden present quite different cases in regard to political populism and the history of radical right parties. We present a quantitative comparative analysis of how the mainstream media have discussed populism as a phenomenon in Finland and in Sweden.

The articles discussing populism between 2000 and 2018 were collected from the online archives of leading dailies Helsingin Sanomat (HS) and Dagens Nyheter (DN). Our focus was on political populism, from which we sampled every tenth article. The total sample thus contains 983 (=n) articles, of which 434 appeared in HS and 549 in DN.

Populism was clearly linked in both countries to the increasing support garnered by domestic radical right parties at the beginning of the 2010s – whereupon the gaze of the media shifted, in 2016–2017, to the manifestations of populism seen in the UK and the US. The neo-Nazi background of the Sweden Democrats has emphasized critical coverage of populism in Sweden compared to the long history of agrarian populism associated with the Finns Party in Finland. However, the public use of the term has increasingly become similar in both countries, when SD has normalized in Sweden, FP turned clearer representative of European radical right, and Trump and others have turned the focus of public debates on authoritarian populism.

Biography of the presenter

Juha Herkman is an Associate Professor of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has studied and published extensively on the relationship between populism and media in various distinguished academic journals. Herkman has been a PI of several research projects related to the topic, for example, "Mainstreaming Populism in the 21st Century" (MAPO, 2017–2021) funded by the Academy of Finland. Herkman is an author of "A Cultural Approach to Populism" (Routledge, 2022).

TOWARD POPULIST SPECTACLE: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA REGULATOR IN (RE) SHAPING MEDIA POLICY IN POLAND

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Dipl.-Soz. Izabela Korbiel, University of Vienna (Austria)

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Abstract

According to Art. 213 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of April 2, 1997, “[T]he National Council of Radio Broadcasting and Television shall safeguard the freedom of speech, the right to information as well as safeguard the public interest regarding radio broadcasting and television.” Meanwhile, a populist shift can be clearly observed in the activities of the Polish regulator. By administrative measures, it aims to redefine the scope of freedom of speech.

This paper is a qualitative analysis of a decision of the Polish media regulator – the National Council of Radio Broadcasting and Television (pol. Krajowa Rada Radiofonii i Telewizji, KRRiTV) – of 28 April 2023 to fine the private radio station TOK FM for a critical review of a textbook about the recent history of Poland. It includes an extended analysis of the decision making process based on published correspondence between the regulator and the fined radio station in order to picture the inconsistency of the argumentation of the regulator. We claim that the independence of the regulator, as one of the pillars of democracy granted in the Constitution, becomes secondary when the political climate promotes populist values. Literature has shown that, historically, populism has had a pattern of being occasional, it tends to appear in times of crisis, often with a near-revolutionary rhetoric. One common factor discussed in scientific works on populism is the use of emotions as a means of political influence. Looking into Polish politics and the main slogans of the ruling party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS), that came into power in 2015, the culture-revolutionary rhetoric of ‘good change’ was predominant. It legitimised the reinterpretation of the Polish history after 1989 popularised in national, and theoretically still public, media. In this paper, we demonstrate that the decision under study legitimises the aforementioned populist techniques.

Biography of the presenters

Dipl.-Soz. Izabela Korbiel is researcher at the University of Vienna. She works on media governance with the emphasis on regulation and the under-researched field of ethics. In her research and teaching, she focuses on communication ethics, feminist research ethics and qualitative research methods. Her research interests range from communication sciences and sociology to social psychology. Izabela Korbiel is member of the Journalism Education and Trauma Research Group (JETREG) and a conflict mediator in training.

Katarzyna du Vall, PhD, JD, is a doctor of law, legal counsel, and political scientist. Since 2019 she has been working in the Department of Political Communication and Media Policy at the Jagiellonian University. Her main research interest lies in the phenomenon of non-democratic state systems, media and intellectual property law.

POPULIST DISCOURSES ABOUT JOURNALISM IN LITHUANIA: SOURCES, CHANNELS, AND MESSAGES

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Abstract

The rise of social media has significantly impacted journalists, journalism, and the public trust in the media. On the one hand, it has given more power to the public to demand media accountability; on the other hand, it has enforced highly biased discursive strategies aimed at engaging audiences of populist social media actors and channels.

Attacks on independent news media in a populist manner, their accusation of disseminating so-called 'fake news' and allegations of their dependence on the state and the corporate world have become attractive to some voters, eventually leading certain political actors to the positions of power. This shift signifies a drift from democracy, where independent media plays a major role, towards authoritarianism.

In Lithuania, however, the majority of populist strategic media attacks occur at the outskirts of the national and regional media landscape. Nonetheless, attempts to undermine the media credibility are constant, and it is only a matter of political constellations as to when these ideas might be enforced on a broader scale.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to map the most active sources, channels, and messages operating in populist communication about journalism and media in Lithuania. The main result of this presentation will be a discourse analysis of such YouTube channels as Op TV and Komentaras TV, as well as an examination of the populist communication tendencies about news media in the discourse of politicians.

Biography of the presenter

Džina Donauskaitė (PhD) is a journalist, media researcher, and the head of the Lithuanian Journalism Center. She works at the Faculty of Communication at Vilnius University and conducts research on the media landscape of the Baltic countries. Her particular focus is on the impact of global platforms such as Google and Facebook on journalism.

POPULISM IN LOCAL VS. CITY/NATIONAL NEWS MEDIA: DISSIMILARITIES DUE TO DIFFERENT READERSHIP FEEDBACK PRACTICES

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Abstract

Populism to some extent is an issue defined by its perception: it is a category used by the participants in political debates, commentators, even observers from the field of academia in a broader sense. This term is used when intending to unmask or disqualify certain propositions, political attitudes, campaign platforms or manifestos of political parties. Crucially, the perceptions of populism that are characteristic of 'media elites' (publishers, editors, etc.) as a clearly delineated social group have never been investigated; however, these perceptions do matter for filtering of the content by the editors, which has an impact on the public opinion. Here, we report from the findings of a questionnaire-based study and a series of in-depth structured interviews with selected typical representatives from the industry in Lithuania. We highlight a pronounced divergence: a more clearly negative view of populism is typical only in the case of the staff at the (larger) city and national newspapers, whereas the local newspaper staff view populism more forgivingly and do not necessarily assume it to be their calling to 'fight against it'. We speculate as to the possible reasons behind the divide: the accounts of the editors/publishers indicate that they rely on somewhat different reader feedback mechanisms. We place the findings within a broader context of the information methodology practices in the Lithuanian press.

Biography of the presenters

MAGNUS TOMAS KĖVIŠAS holds a bachelor's degree in Scandinavian studies and a master's in cognitive neuroscience. Formerly the head at the Department for Parliamentary Information Services at the National Library of Lithuania, he is currently writing his PhD thesis in communication on the circulation of opinions in the public sphere and the process of public opinion. His research interests are mostly the questions of methodology in natural and social sciences and the associated applied problems: the consequences of the method of information in terms of its pragmatic outcomes, especially the tension between democratic and technocratic governance.

ANDRIUS VAIŠNYS is a doctor of communication and information sciences, a professor at Vilnius University's Faculty of Communication. Formerly the Dean of the Faculty of Communication (2007–2017), the Director of the Institute of Creative Medias at VU FC (2012–2013) and the Head of the Department of Political Communication (2017–2021). In 1997–2006, he was heading the Public Relations Unit of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. Since 2009, he has been the Editor-in-Chief of the Editorial Board of the journal *Parlamento studijos* (Parliamentary Studies) and the Chief editor of *Žurnalistikos studijos*. His research interests are information policy and journalism, political communication, development of parliamentarism, and cultural policy. Vaišnys has published the monographs *Spauda ir valstybė 1918–1940: analizė istorinių, teisinių ir politinių aspektu* (1999), *Vieši Seimo ryšiai su visuomene* (2014), *Gražinos Ručytės PIANISSIMO: branda ir sklaida antiformalistinio rojuko metais* (2019), and *Žurnalistikos potvynis: Lietuvos žiniasklaidos sistemos kaita 1986–1990* (2020) and is a co-author of the monograph *Rusijos propaganda: analizė, įvertinimas, rekomendacijos* (2016). He wrote and edited the illustrated history of the Lithuanian parliament of the 20th century *Lietuvos Seimas* (2001).

Panel Session 3. Populist Discourse in Eastern European Audiovisual and Social Media

GLOBAL FORMATS AND LOCAL POLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY EASTERN EUROPEAN TELEVISION SERIES

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Abstract

In the last decade, there has been an emerging scholarly and public interest in the Eastern European region's geopolitical and cultural status, followed by a significant trend of locally developed but globally distributed Eastern European quality television series. The production of knowledge in and about the former socialist countries implies the structural effects of broader geopolitical hierarchies. I intend to show the relationship between transnational aesthetic formats, regional and local political ideologies, and post-socialist cultural hierarchies by analyzing media texts such as Czech series *The Sleepers* (Bez vědomí, HBO, 2019), Hungarian *The Informant* (A besúgó, HBO Max, 2022), Polish *1983* (Netflix, 2018), and Romanian *Spy/Master* (Max, 2023).

Relying on comparative narrative – and textual analysis, this lecture argues that contemporary Eastern European serial products are utilizing a transnational, Westernized image of socialism and following the trends of global social nostalgia to address the contemporary tendencies of political authoritarianism. These products use socialism as an allegory to implement social criticism towards right-wing populist regimes and alarming issues such as white nationalism, surveillance capitalism and social control. They illustrate television's capacity to create public debates about political ideologies, issues of collective memory and collective amnesia, and also its role in structuring 'otherness'. These series are merging classic spy culture of the Cold War era with networks of capitalist surveillance technologies and highlight patterns in which Cold War aesthetic and generic themes have reproduced themselves in the contemporary culture. I examine bonds of power and representation in pre-figurative spectacles of state socialist regimes, personal and political legacies, aesthetic formats and social codes, and strategies of cultural colonization.

Keywords: Eastern Europe, cultural memory, media history, populism, television, serial fiction, socialism, surveillance

Biography of the presenter

VERONIKA HERMANN is Assistant Professor at the Department of Media and Communication at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. She holds MA degrees in Hungarian Literature, Comparative Literature and Media Studies, and obtained her PhD in Literary and Cultural Studies in 2015. Her research interest covers Cold War popular culture, the contemporary and 20th century Eastern European popular culture, relations between socialism and nationalism, and structures of social history in literary and media texts. She has publications and she lectures in Hungarian and English. Her first book *Identity Politics in Literature* was published in 2020.

PARTICULARITY OF POPULISM IN THE TELEVISION CONTENT OF SOVIET LITHUANIA: ENEMIES, HEROES AND INTERPRETATIONS OF THE PAST

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Abstract

The history of television in occupied Lithuania started in 1957, and its main goal was to change people's minds by rethinking the past and reshaping the present. In the 1960s–1980s, television not only became a powerful tool of communication, but also made documentaries and talk shows which showed some of the typical examples of propaganda work and new heroes of the socialist reality. In this paper, the researcher undertakes to analyze how these pictures reflect populism and what were the key features visible on the screen. Even the most popular fictional TV movies and series had direct traces to the cultural policy of the Soviet regime. This paper explores how Lithuanian SSR television and radio committee journalists and directors presented 'bourgeois enemies' and 'socialist heroes' on TV screen. This research investigates the key topics in making the socialist narratives and the impact of those TV examples on the Lithuanian society and wonders whether it is right to call it populism based on the definition of this term.

Biography of the presenter

TOMAS VAITEĲĖ is a PhD student in the field of history at Vilnius University. He is currently working on his doctoral dissertation *Soviet Television in Lithuania (1957–1991): Between the Regimes' Goals, Public Expectations and Professional Ambitions*. His research interests include control and censorship of media in the Soviet Union, popular culture during the Cold War, and film and music history.

AESTHETIC POPULISM. THE RESURGENCE OF CULTURAL NATIVISM ACROSS EAST CENTRAL EUROPE

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Abstract

It is within this conceptual framework of nativism (Art, 2018) and consumer nationalism (Mihelj and César, 2020) that the rejuvenated nostalgia for nationalist populisms across East Central Europe should be approached. The emergence of right-wing parties across post-socialist countries is not, as it has been argued, the indicator of regional susceptibility to illiberalism and unadmitted authoritarianism, but rather symptomatic of a global shift towards such political stances. Often seen in opposition to the ethnically neutral, civic nationalism of the West, the Eastern nationalism has been repeatedly described as ethnicist, underscored by the detrimental inheritance of communist institutional practices. The ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine has further affected the (already frail) regional sentiments of European belonging and collective safety within the global democratic system. It is thus coherent for the core narratives of East Central European nativism to exhibit calls for national restoration, making distinctly moral claims in their rejection of the belatedly imported imperatives of the post-materialist ideology. Cumulative resentment regarding the failed entry into the global market, as well as a pronounced disenchantment with representative politics, frame the discourses of these militant factions, which find their expression across a plethora of cultural contexts, from conservative literary prizes to privately funded cinematographic productions. These “unconventional loci of nation-building” (Billing, 1995) constitute the focal points of the paper which ultimately aims to showcase that the analytic framework of cultural nativism engenders a functional approach to the issue of regional populism.

Biography of the presenter

ANA ȚĂRANU is an independent researcher affiliated with the Department of Cinematography and Media, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania. Her present research interests include East Central European visual cultures, with a focus on the resurgence of nationalist sentiments across the region. She has previously worked on the participation of the historical avantgardes in the nation-building processes of East Central European states and on the involvement of national literary systems in the dissemination of political imagery.

Panel Session 4. Populism in Digital and Mass Culture

RESISTANCE THROUGH MEDIA CONSUMPTION: A STUDY OF POPULAR CULTURE

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Abstract

The topic of popular culture has traditionally held a significant place in the work of the representatives of cultural studies. In the works of the founders of the Birmingham Centre Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall in the 1960s, the most critical themes of the popular culture were outlined: the diversity of the mass culture, the presence of both authentic and inauthentic components within it, and the individual's ability to distinguish between them (McGuigan, 1992). Interest in the popular culture was associated with the quest for grassroots cultural impulses which offered an alternative to the existing ideology.

Stuart Hall and Tony Bennet employed a Gramscian framework to define the popular culture as a battleground for the struggle for hegemony, a dynamic and ever-shifting arena where dominant and subordinate forces get engaged. The popular culture was not simply a form of the social control imposed from above, but it could not be understood as a purely expressive culture emerging from below. Specific forms of the popular culture need to be understood in terms of the opposing poles that the concept brought together, serving as both an ideological constraint and an expressive process.

The Gramscian concept of a zone or terrain, shaped by multiple conflicts, offers the advantage of presenting the popular culture as a site for positive political engagement. This is a highly politicised understanding of the value of the popular culture. The popular culture is where the struggle for identity can be either lost or won, a place where diverse marginalised groups, separated by their cultural backgrounds as much as any other factor, come together as 'people' against 'the power bloc'.

The consistent acknowledgement of the popular culture as an interpretive framework has ultimately legitimised the possibility of perceiving any aspect of the modern culture as a reflection of subjectivity (Hall, 1996). Cultural consumption has emerged as a significant sphere within this context. The validation of pleasure becomes crucial in establishing the positive significance of consumption. Linked to the choice, interpretation, and reproduction of one's own subjectivity, consumption reveals itself as a vital domain of symbolic engagement. This concept found its most radical articulation in John Fiske's notion which subsequently became a primary target for the critics of cultural populism.

Fiske proclaims the popular culture as the domain of 'semiotic democracy' and 'semiotic guerrilla warfare', representing resistance against the homogenisation processes linked to the workings of cultural industries. The consumption of media texts can be viewed as a form of resistance when audiences engage with the popular

culture in ways which challenge the prevailing ideologies, power structures, or cultural norms. Fiske highlights the notion of 'resistance reading' or 'oppositional reading', in which audiences interpret media texts in a manner contrary to the intended or dominant interpretations. Audiences may partake in counter-hegemonic readings by subverting or reinterpreting the meanings and messages presented in media texts. They may use media texts as resources to create alternative identities, values, or worldviews deviating from the prevailing cultural norms. The resistance inherent in media consumption is not always explicitly political or radical. Resistance can manifest itself in subtle, everyday actions, such as individual interpretations, creative fan activities, or routine practises challenging or negotiating the dominant meanings.

According to Jim McGuigan (1992), 'cultural populism' involves recognizing the imperative to transcend one's intellectual preconceptions and delve into comprehending the needs, desires, and living circumstances of the 'ordinary' people. This shift in perspective transforms the popular culture from a subject of detached scholarly enquiry into a cultural and political reference point. Maintaining a sentimentally biased connection with the popular culture and avoiding situating cultural phenomena within a broader political-economic context undermines the critical essence of the endeavour of cultural studies.

Another pivotal aspect of the popular culture examination regarding the emergence of cultural populism issues was the study of television. McGuigan highlighted that television became the primary subject of scrutiny for the representatives of cultural studies during the 1970s and 1980s.

In the study by Stuart Hall et al. (1980), in contrast to the interpretation of reality offered by the mass media, reflecting hegemonic social positions, the groups that are not interested in maintaining the social status quo or whose life-world is not as closely connected to the majority message of the media have their own interpretation of the deliberate and manipulative messages of the media and are profoundly different from the intended encoding. Hall's work highlighted a new direction in studying media perceptions. In contrast to the prevailing notion of a balanced representation of interests, it characterises the media, and, in particular, television, as an instrument of the social conflict serving the interests of the ruling class and propagating the dominant ideology.

Australian researcher Megan Morris identifies the shift toward popular culture studies as a symptom of the banalisation of cultural studies: semiotic analysis aimed at uncovering the polysemy of cultural products raises questions about the ambiguity of texts and the potential for creative consumption. This, in turn, leads to the realisation that the media caters to consumer preferences, displacing criticism in favour of seeking ideological distinctions within the text.

The critique of cultural populism revolves around an evaluation of the intellectual's role in the critique and perpetuation of culture. This evaluation arises from the blurring of distinctions between the mass culture and the high culture and the relativisation of cultural text hierarchies. Uncritical populism, as posited by McGuigan, "perceives popular culture as an unequivocal value for consumers." The focus on situated everyday processes may lead to an overestimation of the control wielded by consumers and a romanticisation of consumption practices as forms of 'resistance'.

The notion of the popular culture and active audiences often serves as a rationale for a decontextualised interpretation of everyday phenomena. The study of these phenomena is often justified by their perceived potential for protest (Ang, 1990).

With the emergence of new media and hybrid cultural forms, as well as the cultural industries that have evolved alongside them, there is a sense of hope associated with the prospect of an authentic popular culture. This leads to expectations of grassroots activism and democratic engagement, potentially bridging the divide between the producers and the consumers (Turner, 2012). Turner identifies in this ideology certain characteristics of cultural populism: a sentimental attitude toward the popular culture, a preference for what is fashionable at the expense of uncomfortable topics, and a rejection of the critical component.

The issue of cultural populism is intriguing because it unveils complex interrelations between ideological (political or disciplinary) stances and methodological self-definition. This discussion enables us to see how the aura of postmodernism took shape, which has, to a considerable extent, become a stigma for cultural studies. At the same time, it serves as a record of the problematic points that have become the foundation for reevaluating the contemporary culture.

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Biography of the presenter

Prof. Dr. JÜRATĖ ČERNEVIČIŪTĖ is a professor at the Department of Creative Communication at the Faculty of Creative Industries at Vilnius Tech and at the Department of Graphic Design at Vilnius Academy of Arts. She earned her master's degree, and defended her research paper *Aesthetic Function of Gesture in Culture* in the field of philosophy of art and aesthetics at the Faculty of Philosophy of Leningrad State University. Since 2000, she has been researching consumer culture, popular culture and creative industries.

MEMORY PRACTICES IN THE MATRIX: INVESTIGATING THE USE OF CHATGPT TO ANALYZE AND PRODUCE SPECULATIVE SNS CONVERSATIONS ON LITHUANIAN CONTESTED HERITAGE

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The role of generative Artificial intelligence (AI) in social science research is one of the current topics of debate in scholarly and public sphere discussions. This role is multifaceted, continually evolving, and consequential in both epistemological and ethical-political terms. AI technologies are expected to significantly impact various aspects of social sciences, including research, data analysis, modeling, and decision-making processes. Generative conversational AI-based tools based on large-scale language models, such as ChatGPT, as powerful tools of information management, bear the promise of allowing social scientists to simulate complex social systems and study the effects of various variables and interventions, while, in tandem, they blur the lines separating researcher from research instrument, and evidence from simulation.

Drawing from semiosphere theory and cultural-historical activity theory, we created and tested a formal conceptual model (also known as “an ontology”) suitable for understanding and modeling how communicative practices on Social Network Sites (SNS), mediated by contested heritage, enable the production of overlapping cultural identities in contemporary Lithuania. Using one important episode in the evolving story of the Eastern European “memory wars”, grassroots communication on SNS discussing the removal of Petras Cvirka’s monument by Vilnius City Council, we experimented combining the results of our evidence-based inquiry with the capabilities of ChatGPT to simulate the generation of a speculative SNS conversation focusing on the Cvirka monument removal. The simulation scenario, speculative semiotic actors, their profiles and roles, are based on the formal conceptual model and the empirical results of our investigation on Facebook interactions on contested memory in Lithuania, conducted within the ‘Connective digital memory in borderlands: a mixed-methods study of cultural identity, heritage communication and digital curation on social networks’ research project.

The research was carried out in the following stages:

1. A ChatGPT analysis of an empirically-attested Facebook conversation (<https://www.delfi.lt/kultura/naujienos/cvirkos-paminklas-bus-nukeliamas-penktadieni-88710865#Echobox=1637240743>) based on user comments to a Delfi news story (<https://www.facebook.com/DelfiLietuva/posts/5581889748506709>), seeking to identify rhetorical and pragmatic properties of messages exchanged in the conversation, as well as to define and categorize the identities and group affiliations of participants.
2. A ChatGPT-based simulation of a speculative Facebook conversation, initiated by the very same Delfi news post, produced by feeding into ChatGPT information on

our conceptual model and results on the genres, topics and rhetorics of similar SNS conversations from our empirical corpus analysis, seeking to better understand how narratives and discourses are constructed in this conversation.

3. Qualitative comparative analysis between speculative and empirically-attested conversations on the removal of Cvirka's monument, seeking to assess the potential of ChatGPT to generate simulated SNS communication data, the discursive, rhetorical and pragmatic properties of such simulated data vis-a-vis empirically attested conversations, and the relational identities and group affiliations of simulated SNS conversation participants vis-a-vis actual Facebook users.

This conference paper will present the methodology and preliminary results of this investigation, and will discuss broader epistemological and ethical implications on the use of conversational generative AI in communication research.

Biographies of the presenters

COSTIS DALLAS is a Professor at the Faculty of Communication of Vilnius University, and a founding Research Fellow of the Digital Curation Unit (DCU), IMIS-Athena Research Centre in Athens, Greece. He is also an Emeritus Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto, where he taught since 2008 serving as Director of its Museum Studies program and as Coordinator of its Collaborative Specializations. His research focuses on non-institutional digital curation "in the wild", on scholarly research, communication and curation methods and digital infrastructures, and on heritage, memory and identity practices of global communities on social media. He co-edited *Cultural Heritage Infrastructures in Digital Humanities* (Routledge, 2017), and has over 50 peer reviewed publications in scholarly journals and conference proceedings. Costis holds a BA in History from the University of Ioannina, Greece, as well as MPhil and DPhil degrees in Classical Archaeology from the University of Oxford. He is the principal investigator of "Connective Digital Memory in the Borderlands: A mixed-methods study of cultural identity, heritage communication and digital curation on social networks", and of "E-CURATORS: Pervasive Digital Curation Activities, Objects and Infrastructures in Archaeological Research and Communication".

RIMVYDAS LAUŽIKAS is a digital heritage research and communication professor at the Faculty of Communication at Vilnius University. His education is in the interdisciplinary fields of educational sciences, history, archaeology, communication, and information sciences. Rimvydas' research interests cover the communication of cultural heritage and museology, history and heritage-based identities, and the history of gastronomy. He has written four monographs (with co-authors) and more than 50 scholarly articles in the fields of his interests. He participates in international expert groups (such as the Evaluation Body of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage), projects (such as CARARE), and COST Actions (Saving European Archaeology from the Digital Dark Age (SEADDA)) and Archaeological practices and knowledge work in the digital environment (ARK-WORK). Rimvydas Laužikas taught a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate academic courses in history, cultural and digital heritage, heritage communication, digital culture, and museum studies. He served as the primary supervisor of eight PhD dissertations.

DOCUMENTING AND ARCHIVING POPULISM: IMPLICATIONS FOR ARCHIVAL METHODS

Prof. Robert Riter, The University of Alabama (United States (US))

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Abstract

What documentary and archival infrastructures are required to enable immediate and future critiques of populist discussion? How is populist discourse instantiated in records and media artifacts? What records/artifacts/sources are scholars and analysts drawing on in their investigations?

This paper addresses these three questions and provides an archival analysis of populist discourse. Include in this analysis are three components. First, I will examine the information ecology of populism, focusing attention on examining the nature of records and artifacts generated by populist discourse. Second, I undertake a source analysis of current research [focusing on the United States] to assess the categories of records and artifacts identified and used by researchers, and the limits of these sources in enabling stated critical objectives. Third, I analyze ongoing initiatives to document and preserve records populist discourse in the United States to identify the extent there exists a broader documentary strategy.

The goal of this three-pronged approach is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the archivalization of populist discourse, with research goal of contributing to our understanding of the evidence generated by populist activities, discuss how this evidence is being used in critique, and lastly, assessing ongoing initiatives to form the archives necessary to support stated research objectives. This research approach is grounded in the discipline of archival studies and is concerned with investigating the archival dimensions of populist discourse.

Biography of the presenter

ROBERT RITER is a faculty member in The University of Alabama's School of Library and Information Studies.



#CLIMATEHOAX – UNTANGLING THE WEB OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

Climate change is a highly politicised topic, due to its communication being shaped along ideological fault lines, under the influence of economically and politically motivated actors. Although there is now a strong scientific consensus on the existence of anthropogenic climate change, a significant minority denies its existence nevertheless. Previous research examining the issue in relation to a range of demographic indicators found that political ideological attitudes correlate most clearly with climate beliefs (Poortinga et al., 2019). Moving beyond science communication, climate change communication has shifted towards social media, which carries the danger of accelerating and facilitating the spread of misinformation and disinformation. Since previous research examining the topic has disproportionately focused on Twitter when examining the content on social media platforms (Pearce et al., 2018), this case study draws its sample from Instagram, and examines content related to two of the most frequently used climate sceptic hashtags (#climatechangehoax, #climatehoax). This corpus enables to examine the content generated by individual users of the platform as well as professionals. In order to investigate the climate sceptic and denier content as a whole, including visual, textual and aural elements, the research combines quantitative content analysis with the qualitative methods of multimodal critical discourse analysis. Climatesceptic communication on Instagram is characterised by negative reflexivity which embeds scepticism about climate change in a broad web of conspiracy theories. Among these, science-denying flat Earth theories and the chemtrail theory linked to depopulation agenda are dominant, and have already defined the spread of misinformation in the context of COVID19 (Fuchs 2021). Systemic conspiracy theories, in line with the populist rhetoric, contrast the machinations of a power-hungry elite against the common people, which only the susceptible ‘awakened’ ones recognise. In contrast to the previous research on climate scepticism on Twitter, the content here is not event-driven, but abstract and systemic.

Biography of the presenter

VIRÁG VÉCSEY is assistant professor and PhD candidate at ELTE, Budapest, where she is also the founder and head of the Media Design Specialisation (BA) at the Institute for Art Theory and Media Research. Her fields of research are environmental communication, climate change communication and eco-criticism. She investigates how environmental problems and the relationship of humans and nature is communicated visually through various media. Recently, she has been doing research on the animated representations of climate change on YouTube. Her most recent paper *Ecocritical Readings on Academy Award-winning Animated Shorts* has been published in the *Journal Environmental Communication*.

Panel Session 5 (preconstituted). Populism in Contemporary Hungarian Cinema: Historical, Generic, Comparative and Transnational Contexts

Chair: Assist. Prof. Dr. Zsolt Győri, The University of Debrecen (Hungary)

Panel Abstract

There have been various attempts to define the populist politics since the 2010s in Eastern Europe, and there are also different possible explanations for its success. These include the dissatisfaction with corrupt and ineffective elitist government policies and the disillusionment with the post-socialist transition and neoliberal capitalism. The first is more general, whereas the second is more specific. What they have in common is a turn away from the ways and slogans of the earlier policies and ideas of governmentality. The turn inwards has not only strengthened self-conscious patriotic sentiments, but also the suspicion towards the European Union and global multicultural influences in general, and migration in specific.

The discussion of populism within regional and local screen industries is particularly interesting because, on the one hand, this industry is strongly embedded in global networks and, on the other hand, screen fiction has always been a privileged medium of popular political ideologies and imaginaries. This is not different in the case of the contemporary populist trends in Eastern Europe, including Hungary.

Cultural policies actively supported the illiberal turn in Hungary with cinema being no exception. After major institutional changes in 2011, a financially and professionally sound but competitive system of film funding was inaugurated under Andrew Vajna. These are the government commissioners for film. The real populist turn in cinema occurred after the appointment of a new commissioner and board under whose leadership the state funds began to favour loyal producers and genres, including costume dramas and heritage films. Papers in this panel both seek to explore the cultural imaginations, national(ist) fantasies, narratives and conspiracy theories propagated by the populist memory of the past and illuminate the nostalgic, sentimental, heroic, and emotional qualities underlying such memory. The restorative-conservational nature of this memory and its reliance on visual and motific clichés (bucolic imagery, folk culture) will be discussed by drawing historical analogies, while the conspiratorial nature of the populist memory will be demonstrated by films adopting the global generic patterns of political thrillers. In addition, the short-term effects of the populist turn in the Hungarian cinema will also be explained as detrimental, threatening the very existence of a cosmopolitan, stylistically and generically heterogeneous national cinema.

CONSPIRACY AGAINST CONSPIRACY

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Balázs Varga, Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary)

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Abstract

The title comes from Svetlana Boym: she wrote that conspiracy theories are conspiracies against conspiracies. Eastern Europe has always been a hotbed of conspiracy theories. It was no different in the post-socialist period, when the transformation of the region was also accompanied by numerous local and regional conspiracy theories or scandals. The Smolensk tragedy, in which dozens of members of the Polish political elite perished; the Czech Gorilla scandal or the kidnapping of President Meciar's son in Slovakia; the Hungarian taxi strike in 1990 or the siege of the TV headquarters in 2006 – it is no coincidence that most of these events have been the basis for films in the last decade. The decade (the 2010s and early 2020s) that also saw the story of the regime change called into question the rise of illiberal/populist movements. Moreover, the regime change itself is often interpreted as a large-scale conspiracy.

The proposed paper will analyse the relationship between conspiracy theories and populism by means of two prominent cinematic examples. They are taken from Polish and Hungarian cinema and politics respectively. The Polish film (*Smolensk*, 2016, by Antoni Krauze) discusses the Smolensk tragedy, whereas the Hungarian one deals with the siege of the TV headquarters (*The Cost of Deception*, 2021, by Keith English). Both films use the patterns of the political thriller genre and introduce the (background) story of the political scandal through the stories of investigative journalists. The paper will analyse variations on the local, Eastern European application of the global (Americanised) genre patterns, with a particular focus on how these films and genre elements fit into the rhetoric of the contemporary political populism.

Biography of the presenter

BALÁZS VARGA is an Associate Professor of Film Studies at ELTE, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary. He writes and lectures on modern and contemporary Hungarian cinema, contemporary European cinema, production studies, popular cinemas and documentaries. He is a founding editor of *Metropolis*, a scholarly journal on the film theory and history based in Budapest. He has published several articles and essays in English, Italian, Polish, Czech and Hungarian books and journals. His recent book in Hungarian *Filmrendszerváltások. A magyar játékfilm intézményeinek átalakulása 1990–2010* [Film regime changes. Transformations in Hungarian Film Industry 1990–2010] is brought out by L'Harmattan Publishers, Budapest. His current project focuses on popular Hungarian and East European screen cultures during and after Socialism.

REITERATED POPULISM REITERATED, RECURRING TOPICS

Asoc. Prof. Dr. Györgyi Vajdovich, Eötvös Loránd University (Hungary)

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Abstract

A new trend has appeared in the Hungarian cinema in recent years: historical epics and biopics of famous historical figures have been produced in growing numbers. Political representatives and the National Film Institute have declared their interest in the topic and encouraged as well as supported the creation of historical films, in spite of their irrationally high cost and a low rate of return. These pieces epitomize the current discourse of populism reigning in the Hungarian political and cultural life, emphasizing nationalist and anti-elite ideas and reinforcing the polarization of society.

Although this trend seems to be new in the Hungarian cinema, its roots go back several decades, and we can trace its predecessors in various eras of the history of the Hungarian cinema, equally under right-wing and left-wing regimes. During the 1930s–1940s, dominated by right-wing political forces, anti-elitism and polarization of society emerged in the politically supported ‘Heimat films’ representing the beauties of honest, untouched country life. Historical epics or costume dramas of the same era enacted certain events of the Hungarian history encouraging the creation of national heroes, along with the idealization of lower-class figures. Interestingly, the resurrection of similar figures and themes can be noted during the Stalinist era of the 1950s, which, in spite of its left-wing ideology, found its own heroes in the historical figures of the national past.

Both eras provide a model for historical films funded by the present political regime, which revives the political discourse of the 1930s–1940s in many aspects, but in fact takes inspiration from both eras as to the creation of a national mythology and retelling of the national past.

Biography of the presenter

GYÖRGYI VAJDOVICH is an associate professor at the Institute for Art Theory and Media Studies, Department of Film Studies at Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) in Budapest, Hungary. Her research and teaching interests include early film history, with special focus on Hungarian cinema before 1945, questions of intermediality and cultural transfer, and contemporary Bollywood. She is member of the research group on Hungarian Film History founded by ELTE University and of the international Euro-Bollywood research group. She is a founding editor of the quarterly on film theory and film history *Metro-polis*. Her articles on the above topics have been published in English, French and Hungarian in various periodicals and journals.

POPULISM AND THE HEROIC HISTORICAL FILM IN CONTEMPORARY HUNGARIAN CINEMA

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Abstract

Political populism holds history dear, so much so, that it builds a cultural ecosystem around it much like the populist media operates its echo chamber, a self-contained environment of beliefs, imaginations and narratives circulated without the interference of opposing views. Cinema has gained prominence within the cultural ecosystem of populism and, with an ambitious production schedule for historical biopics and period pieces under the Káel-era of film funding, historical cinema has come to a dominance which has never been seen before. My presentation explores the trivialization of history in these representations, a strategy that abandons diverse perspectives, formalizes historical and cultural memory, and favors the ideological heroic genre of remembering.

In my assertion, populism can recruit history to fight its ideological battles only after conceptualizing the past as an epistemic continuation of a present, a present in which heroic patriotic, and ultraconservative identity structures have to defend themselves against corrupt and outdated identity structures. I explore this paradox and the strategies employed in the construction of heroic memory in films picturing the distant (*Hadik*, 2023) and not so distant past (*Blocade*, 2022).

I also investigate the mixed effects of burgeoning historical cinema on the Hungarian film industry as a whole, calling attention to, on the one hand, industry synergies (developed studio capacity, runaway productions, qualified workforce) from which historical film might potentially benefit and, on the other hand, the immense cost of historical feature films that fail to reach foreign audiences and international festivals, yet drain funding from critically successful productions of modest budgets. As a result of this populism, the film industry and the film culture in today's Hungary are in dissonance in a sense that while the former happily serves state-solicited vanity projects, policymakers antagonize the profession, render independent producers impossible, limit the poetic and thematic variety and, as a consequence, introduce disturbing asymmetries into the national film art.

Biography of the presenter

ZSOLT GYŐRI is an assistant professor at the University of Debrecen. His research interests include British and Hungarian cinema, auteur theory, the intersections of cinema studies, spatial studies and cultural studies, and the synergies between cinema and popular music. In these areas he has authored, edited and co-edited nine volumes. His most recent edited publications include *Postsocialist Mobilities* (CSP, 2021), and *Europe and European Cinema at Times of Change* (DUPress, 2021). He serves as an associate editor of the *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies* and is a member of the steering committee of the Hungarian Society for the Study of Cinema.

Panel Session 6. Politics and Populism in Film and TV

THE YELLOW BANANA: POPULIST DISCOURSE IN DANISH FILM AND TELEVISION

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Abstract

In this paper, I will analyse two recent productions from Denmark which, in different ways, deal with populist dichotomies such as the elite vs common people, city vs countryside, and foreign vs native. The context of the paper is the landslide victory of the populist party, *The Danish People's Party*, in 2015. The win became known as the victory of 'udkantsdanmark' (outskirt Denmark), a term which, since 1992, has signified the Danish municipalities located most far away from, in particular, Copenhagen, but also other major cities in Denmark.

Outskirt Denmark's election victory also went under the name of 'the revolution of the yellow banana' from the fact that yellow is the colour of The Danish People's Party in the ballot system and that the banana fruit eventually will turn brown, when rotten, thus revealing the true fascist nature of the party. This has, of course, not happened. Denmark is not fascist and, instead, it could be argued that the opposite is the case. It is this reversion of narratives that the paper will look at through the lens of two media productions: the 8-part tv-series *Far/Dad* (2020), the debut series of the comedy-duo FLÆS/Sofie Jo Kaufmanas and Mette Søndergaard Nielsen, and the film *Hvor kragerne vender/Persona non grata* (2021), the debut feature film by Lise Jespersen.

The argument that I will present is that both the tv-series *Dad* and the film *Persona non grata* actively deal with a particular Danish populist narrative of a disenfranchised population living in 'the yellow banana', the people whose only way of survival is to leave their region and their homes. In the Marxist literature, such a predicament would be termed as alienation or reification of a class, but neither alienation nor a class is something that these productions highlight. Instead, it is through such constellations as family and community, chosen or not, that the productions seek to recast being and belonging in outskirts Denmark. However, this process of mitigation or 'reparation' of the broken nation (the yellow-brown banana) also carries with its shortcuts and shorthands pertaining to the production values of film and tv-series, which, in turn, highlights how fiction can only partly function on the level of politics.

Biography of the presenter

LARS KRISTENSEN teaches game development at the University of Skövde. His research focuses on Eastern European filmmaking, bicycle cinema and Marxist approaches to moving images. His current research topics include Inuit cinema, game art and the ideological apparatus theory. He is the editor of *Art and Game Obstruction* (Rojal 2016) and *Postcommunist Film – Russia, Eastern Europe and World Culture* (Routledge, 2012) as well as co-editor of four collections with Ewa Mazierska on Marxism and cinema.

CHASED BY HISTORY: THE CINEMATIC PROJECTIONS OF POPULIST POLITICS OF HISTORY IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

Asist. Prof.Dr. Dr Mikołaj Kunicki, Ithaca College London Center (UK)

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Abstract

In this paper I examine the cinematic projections of populist politics of history in contemporary Poland. The approach of central European populist authoritarians to contemporary history has been largely determined by current political concerns, by “the presence of the now [Jetztzeit],” to quote Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” (1940). The rewriting of national past in a way that legitimizes the ruling party of the Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS) and forges ethnocentric nationalist and Catholic identity is a powerful example of the politicization of history and memory. Aleida Assmann lists two seemingly incompatible approaches in the contemporary politics of history, a “politics of assertion” which projects positive national self-images centred on the heroics of honour and collective suffering, and a “politics of regret” which inserts negative chapters into the national history, for example, crimes perpetrated against minorities (Assmann, 2020). The PiS endorses the former trend, while claiming to practice the latter by commemorating the victims of Communism, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

First, I will examine ‘patriotic’ films and TV series that glorify the mythologised community of ‘accursed soldiers’ – resisters who fought the communist government after World War II – who, according to the PiS, embody ultimate heroism and patriotic sacrifice. Second, I will focus on *Ludzie i bogowie* (Humans and gods, Bodo Kox, 2020), a tale of resistance ‘liquidators’ of Nazis and collaborators in occupied Warsaw. A blend of Tarantinoesque violence and populist history, this popular series was produced by the state TV, which is the mouthpiece of government propaganda. It was directed by Bodo Kox, the former poster boy of Polish independent cinema. Lastly, I will look at *Krucjata. Prawo serii* (Crusade. Great deeds will come, Łukasz Ostalski, 2022-23), another state TV product. This police thriller investigates the assassinations of liberal politicians, celebrities, and former communist police officials by a terrorist organization. The series virtually follows the nationalist-populist mantra that members of the liberal establishment represent the interests of the arrangement set up by the ex-communist secret service and progressive intelligentsia.

The study will account for broad trends in the pro-government filmmaker’s choices, against a general outline of the role of film and television industries in memory wars and turns that grappled Europe after the end of the Cold War and Poland’s entry into the European Union.

Biography of the presenter

MIKOŁAJ KUNICKI is an Adjunct Professor in European cinema at Ithaca College London Center and the Institute of Journalism and Social Communication, University of Wrocław. He taught history at the University of Oxford, University of Notre Dame, and UC Berkeley. From 2013 to 2016 he was the director of Programme on Modern Poland in St Antony’s College. Kunicki received his PhD in History from Stanford University in 2004. His research concentrates on communism, nationalism, authoritarianism and their relationships with popular cultures of cinema and performing arts. He is the author of *Between the Brown and the Red: Nationalism, Catholicism and Communism in Twentieth Century Poland* (Ohio University Press, 2012) as well as articles and chapters on Polish and European history, cinema, nationalism and contemporary politics.

ANTI-ELITISM IN EMILIS VĖLYVIS'S POLITICAL THRILLERS "ZERO 3" (2017) AND "THE GENERATION OF EVIL" (2022)

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Renata Šukaitytė, Vilnius University, Faculty of Communication
(Lithuania)

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Abstract

This paper researches the discourse of anti-elitism as a component of the populist discourse by focusing on two political thrillers by Emilis Vėlyvis – *Zero 3* (2017) and *The Generation of Evil* (2022). Vėlyvis wrote the scripts for these films together with screenwriter Jonas Banys whose most popular works often feature populist tropes (sinister foreigners, corrupt elites, an immoral and pragmatic middle class, etc.). I argue that one of the characteristics of the selected sample films, which turned them into popular films, is the marked criticism (or even hostility) towards the local political elites, media and public institutions which are represented as corrupt and indifferent to Lithuanian people. From this point of view, these films are quite unique in the local film milieu and deserve scrutiny, especially when they were released (and reached the wide audience) at a time when the populist rhetoric became frequent in political communication, and populist characters occupy more space and time in the national and European media.

The conclusions of the research paper are built on close introspection of the populist tropes used in the narratives of these films, based on Benjamin Arditi's notion of "populism as a mode of representation" (Arditi 2007) and the conceptual model of populist communication, as developed by Sina Blassnig, Nicole Ernst, Florin Büchel, Sven Engesser & Frank Esser (Blassnig, 2019). I argue that two dimensions of populist communication – 'the anti-elitism' and 'exclusion' – are most common in *Zero 3* and *The Generation of Evil*. They serve for discrediting the political elites and public institutions, and thus detaching them from the people.

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Panel Session 7. Political Populism During Times of Crisis

POPULIST COMMUNICATION DURING TIMES OF CRISIS ACROSS PARTY LINES

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Abstract

The study explores how crises affect the usage of populist political communication, and whether a crisis could be argued to trigger populist communication. Previous studies have shown how populist challengers in different European countries have mobilised support during a crisis. However, less attention has been paid to the overall usage of populist communication among political actors during times of crisis. Thus, a communication-oriented approach is adopted to analyse how crises affect the overall usage of populist political communication.

More specifically, the investigation focuses on the kind of crisis that is most likely to generate populist communication. To this end, two distinct external crises, namely the Euro crisis and the Refugee crisis, are compared to determine which one offers the most fertile ground for this type of communication.

Automated-human content analysis was used to analyse communication among politicians in the main political arena, and to assess the extent to which populist communication is used during times of crisis. The data consists of plenary debates conducted during the 2010s in Finland, allowing comparison of the two crises and of how populist communication was used before, during and after them.

The study findings indicate that crises do influence the use of populist communication, albeit to different extents depending on the crisis and the actor(s). There was a marked rise in usage during the Refugee crisis, but no statistically significant increase during the Euro crisis. Party status and governmental role also influence how and by whom populist rhetoric is employed. Additionally, the type of populist messaging shifted from predominantly anti-elitist to increasingly exclusionary during and after the Refugee crisis. Thus, one could argue that specific phenomena such as the Refugee crisis rather than crises in general should be considered potential triggers of populist communication.

Biography of the presenter

JON JÄRVINIEMI is a Doctoral researcher of political science at the University of Helsinki and a board member of the Finnish Political Science Association. With a keen interest in the evolving landscape of populist communication, Järvinieniemi's research delves into the intricacies of this phenomenon in Finland. Järvinieniemi explores how populist communication has developed over time, across party-lines on various political arenas. Järvinieniemi's work is not only focused on tracing the usage of populist communication but also on identifying the triggers that set it in motion. His current research investigates the impact of different crises on the utilization of populist communication.

THE IBERIAN FAR-RIGHT POPULISTS AND IMMIGRATION: AN ANALYSIS OF CHEGA AND VOX

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Abstract

The following paper uses Ruth Wodak's discourse-historical approach (2001) of critical discourse analysis to analyze the discourse of far-right populist parties VOX and *Chega* on immigration. There is a considerable volume of literature which has depicted the European populist far-right as having an anti-immigration agenda (Akkerman, 2018; Wodak, 2019; Silva et al., 2014), as it is visible by its ethnically homogeneity and nationalist stance (Brubaker, 2017). Moreover, refugees, along with Muslim communities, are usually portrayed as a dangerous threat to Europe, an 'ethnic invasion' that is harming the European core values, identity, and culture (Bromley, 2018).

The unit of analysis consists of Facebook posts from the official accounts of these parties from the period of January through March 2023. Social media was chosen as the unit of analysis due to its affordances related to direct communication between politicians and voters, since, unlike most other types of communication channels which belong to the traditional media sphere, information does not go through a process of moderation and content curation. Khosravinik (2017) has pointed out the emergence of the social media as a valuable tool for the populist far right, by arguing that the algorithms of these platforms provide populism a place to flourish. The theoretical framework draws from identity politics and Henry Tajfel's *Social Identity Theory* (1974) in order to identify the in-and-out group dynamics which both parties are trying to depict. I will focus on the discursive constructions of immigrants, on the discursive strategies employed in the process, and on the interdiscursivity of immigration with other types of discourse, such as, for example, criminality, islamophobia, or economy discourses.

Biography of the presenter

TIAGO GOMES Lapa is a Media and Communication studies PhD student at Charles University in Prague. His research focuses on the populist discourse in social media in Portugal and Spain.

PERSONAL BRANDING IN POPULIST COMMUNICATION: CASE STUDY OF CAMPAIGN ON ANTI-COVID REGULATIONS IN LITHUANIA

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Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic increased communication activities by populist political actors as it provided opportunities to gain attention of some groups of the society and forming communities with the help of communication strategies based on the political populist communication style: stressing the anti-elite (or anti-political establishment) approach, raising the importance of the representation of interests of the people and the expression of a common interest. The role of the social media as a platform where communities (information bubbles) could be created to spread misinformation increased during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Populist political actors were among those who were actively using communication on social media platforms with the objective to promote their position on the government's risk management decisions. The advent of COVID-19 pandemic elevated several 'new' actors in the Lithuanian political arena who constructed their communication strategies by using the topic of anti-COVID regulations as the basis for their civic position in the interest of the people and the common good, while opposing the existing political establishment and their proposed measures to manage COVID-19 pandemic and the involved risks. The case study investigates the branding of new actors by their use of populist communication. It is presented by highlighting the key elements of the populist communication strategies used to create a personal brand by raising awareness and showing a populist political actor as the responsible person/influencer taking an active position in the communication on anti-COVID-19 regulation in Lithuania during the years 2020–2023.

Biography of the presenter

Dr. RENATA MATKEVIČIENĖ has been researching communication for more than 15 years. She has recently worked on organizational communication, social responsibility, political communication, trust, and societal and community resilience in both business and political communication contexts.

Renata Matkevičienė has been a member of the Lithuanian Communication Association for more than 10 years; in 2018, she prepared the first Lithuanian glossary of communication and PR terms with her colleagues.

Since 2016, she has been actively cooperating with NGOs, consulting on communication, storytelling, and manipulation in public spaces.

POPULISM IN THE MEDIA DURING THE RUSSIAN AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE

Prof. Dr. Nina Zrazhevskaya, Borys Hrinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine)

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Abstract

Russian aggression against Ukraine will intensify the growth of populism in the media and has serious consequences on the information agenda. The media in different countries cover the conflict through different ideological lenses, while sometimes exacerbating divisions and encouraging a violent sentiment. Populist leaders and movements have taken advantage of this situation by using the media to promote their own agendas and manipulate the public opinion.

One aspect of media populism during the Russian aggression against Ukraine was the dissemination of sensational and biased narratives. Some media outlets have tended to present information in the ways which evoke fear, anger or victimhood, often in favor of their own national or ideological interests. This leads to an increase in divisive narratives, such as portraying Ukrainians as aggressors, or portraying Russians as heroic defenders.

Social media platforms have been playing a significant role in spreading populist narratives during the conflict. They provide a space where disinformation, propaganda, and inflammatory rhetoric can quickly reach a wide audience, thereby amplifying the already existing divisions and helping to polarize the public opinion. The lack of fact-checking and the rapid spread of information on the social media made it easier for populists to exploit the situation and manipulate the public sentiment.

In addition, populist politicians use the conflict to advance their own political agendas and capitalize on the public discontent. They often use simplistic narratives which resonate with the public by posing as strong leaders who will protect the national interests and restore stability. It appeals to those who have become disillusioned with the prevailing policies and institutions and who are looking for simple solutions to complex problems.

The rise of populism in the media during this period has a significant impact on the public discourse and influences how the conflict is perceived and interpreted by different audiences.

Biography of the presenter

NINA ZRAZHEVSKAYA, Doctor of Science in Social Communications, Professor of the Department of International Journalism. She is a member of: the National Assembly of Journalists of Ukraine, the Specialized Marriage classified as D 26.001.34 for the specialty 00.27.01 – Theory and History of Social Communications – from 2016 to 2018; expert of philological sciences and social communications at the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine from 2015 to 2018; member of NMC for journalism and social communications KNU im. T. Shevchenko since 2007; member of the editorial board of scientific scholarship Social communications: theory and practice; member of the editorial board of the scientific journal *Bulletin of Kharkiv National University named after V. N. Karazina. Series: Social Communications* since 2014 (m. Irpin); member of the editorial board of the journal *Irpinsk Humanitarian Bulletin* since 2016 (m. Irpin); head of the expert commission Accreditation Expertise for the Preparation of Masters of ChNU im. B. Khmelnytsky 8.18010019 Media communication Gruden 2015; head of the department of media communication of the Ukrainian Catholic University from 2013 to 2020; guarantor of the professional/illumination-science journalism program of Kiev Boris Hrinchenko University.

Panel Session 8. Populist Leaders and Politicians

POPULIST LEADERSHIP IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC THROUGH MEDIA FRAMING PERSPECTIVE

Jan Křovák, Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic)

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Anna Shavit, Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic)

Marcela Konrádová, Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic)

Abstract

Political leadership as a political science concept has yet to receive sufficient academic attention (Leach et al., 2005). Most of the literature focuses on leaders at the highest levels, i.e., presidents and prime ministers (Hartley, 2010). However, leaders play a crucial role in politics, whether they have formal authority given by their position, or possess informal authority, such as high levels of charisma (Heifetz, 1994). It is the latter that is often associated with populist leaders.

Our paper aims to analyze how the news media in the Czech Republic frame the concept of populist leadership, by focusing on Andrej Babiš, the former Czech prime minister and a prominent populist leader. His form of populist leadership lies in a catch-all strategy focusing on anti-establishment rhetoric and promises to address corruption and inefficiency in the government. The research draws on the *Framing Theory* (Entman, 2007) which posits that media coverage can shape the public opinion by framing issues in a particular way. This study will focus on how the news media in the Czech Republic construct the concept of populist leadership, characterized by appeals to the 'people against the political elite' struggle, anti-establishment rhetoric, and a focus on national sovereignty (e.g., Mudde, 2017).

The research will use a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative content analysis (Rourke & Anderson, 2004) of the three most visited Czech online news media – iDnes.cz, Novinky, Seznam Zprávy with qualitative analysis based on pragmalinguistics (Marmaridou, 2011). The three news media outlets selected for the quantitative analysis have been chosen based on their differing ideological leanings and ownership situations. The outlets were being monitored for four weeks during the Czech presidential elections (first round and second round) in January 2023 and two weeks after the conclusion of the election. The main focus will be how the media were framing Andrej Babiš during his campaign and after the election.

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Biography of the presenter

JAN KŘOVÁK is a journalist who works for Czech national news media, Echo24, and focuses on the activities of the Government of the Czech Republic and the Czech 'big league' politics in general. He is also a researcher representing the Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) at Charles University in Prague, focusing on the study of populism in political communication and the relationship between populism and the (news) media. He is member of the Academic Senate of Charles University and serves as the secretary of the FSS' Academic Senate.

DECEPTIVE ACCOUNTS AND FORCED MEMES: HOW POPULISM IS ENACTED ON FACEBOOK IN ORBÁN'S HUNGARY

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Abstract

Turning to the digital in the political communication of Hungary's ruling party, *Fidesz*, is a recent and mixed phenomenon. While the government politicians have long been present on various social media platforms since 2010, only after the partly unsuccessful 2019 municipal elections (when the incumbent party lost the popular vote in the capital) did *Fidesz* start strategically applying the computational affordances of networked media. In the present paper, I argue that this move incorporated elements of digital populism, political influencer marketing, and astroturf propaganda, respectively.

With network analysis of pro-government accounts and content analysis of their postings between 2020 and 2022, I demonstrate the division of digital labor between different agents active in politics on Facebook, Hungary's number one social media platform. While verified pages of politicians and the prime minister engage in anti-elite messages and adapt personalized politics known from the populist playbook, their online presence is mostly devoid of participatory appeal, both aesthetically and performatively.

According to my hypothesis, organic activities by 'common people' are considered a risk in an informational autocracy (Guriev & Treisman, 2020), such as Hungary, where centralization penetrates more and more walks of life. Consequently, the influx of patriotic voices which ensures circulation on the social media had to be orchestrated top-down, as happened with the founding of the *Megafon Digital Incubator Centre* in 2020. *Megafon* engages in two types of political communication: influencer marketing (micro-celebrities authenticating messages) and astroturfing (accounts mimicking ordinary people to simulate grass-roots consensus).

In my presentation, through selected case studies, I shall show how institutional politics and third parties cooperate to fulfill the main communication goals of spreading disinformation and influencing the public opinion on the social media in Hungary.

Biography of the presenter

SZILVI NÉMETH (1985) is a Budapest-based researcher and journalist. She studies as a Ph.D. student at the Doctoral School of Film, Media, and Cultural Theory at Eötvös Loránd University of Arts and Sciences, where she explores meme cultures and online political spaces. She is currently a fact-checker and journalist at Lakmusz.hu, an anti-disinformation site part of the European Digital Media Observatory. She specializes in social media research, by focusing on grey zone media and political astroturfing. She co-authored the book *Toxic Technocultures and Digital Politics* in 2021.

HOW POPULIST RHETORIC CREATES UNIFORM DRAMMATICAL IMAGES: THE CASE OF LITHUANIAN POLITICAL LEADERS ON FACEBOOK

Assist. Prof. Dr. Giedrė Vaičekauskienė, Vilnius University, Faculty of Communication (Lithuania)

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Abstract

This paper examines populism as a communication phenomenon, with a particular focus on the convergence of political and media populism. While the academic discourse often emphasizes political populism, the influence of the media on populist communication cannot be overlooked, especially considering the proliferation of new media platforms. This study explores the stylistic features shared by political and media populism, including addressing the 'people', dramatizing reality, and framing conflicts. Today, politicians are being considered to be 'experts of the media' who are able to independently attract the attention of the mass audience with 'interesting messages'. In today's hybrid media system, politicians, as well as journalists and citizens, are competing for popular news/stories. Specifically, it analyzes the rhetoric employed by various political leaders and members of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on the Facebook platform to project persuasive images to a mass audience. The empirical study was based on the ideas of the discourse method that "we know other people through texts" and "the discourse itself creates an image of the speaker." Through rhetorical analysis, this study reveals that, regardless of their status as the ruling or opposition parties or their ideologies, political leaders are employing similar strategies on Facebook, such as denigrating one's political opponents, employing abusive rhetoric, and propagating negative narratives.

Biography of the presenter

Dr. GIEDRĖ VAIČEKAUSKIENĖ is an assistant professor at Vilnius University, Faculty of Communication. Giedrė Vaičekauskienė majored in political communication. She has 18 years' experience in television. She worked in the TV newsroom for 13 years. With her extensive experience as a television presenter and program creator, Giedrė Vaičekauskienė is currently using her skills in academia. As a lecturer in higher education, Giedrė Vaičekauskienė is teaching her students the art of creating compelling stories through courses in Rhetoric, Public Speaking, and Audiovisual Media. Her research has been focusing on the role of rhetoric in the news media, with a particular emphasis on the communication strategies of Lithuanian political leaders.

POPULISTS IN THE LITHUANIAN PARLIAMENT: MAJOR NARRATIVES IN 2020–2023

Assoc. Prof. Liutauras Ulevičius, Vilnius University, Faculty of Communication (Lithuania)

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Abstract

The academic discussion about populist communication covers a number of aspects, but they are seldom cross-checked from relatively distant data sources: (a) citizens' evaluation and (b) dominant narratives. We take public survey data about politicians – members of the Lithuanian Parliament – assumed as populist by the majority of the population as a starting point. We do not question or discuss this subjective and broad evaluation. We take media monitoring data and try to identify the major public narratives associated with these politicians. Similarities or differences will provide an opportunity to check the characteristics of populist politicians, group them, and potentially open up new areas for further populist communication research.

Biography of the presenter

LIUTAURAS ULEVIČIUS has been a communication practitioner for more than two decades. His main areas of activity are commercial, NGO and political communication. Since 2014, Liutauras has also been focusing his professional efforts on challenges in countering hostile disinformation. As Partnership Docent at Vilnius University, he also lectures on Persuasion, Theories of Propaganda, Public Diplomacy, Crisis and Emergency Communication, and Political Communication in Social Media.

Panel Session 9. Populism During Elections and Sport Events

EUROPEAN PUBLIC SPHERE, POPULISM AND TWITTER IN THE 2019 EP ELECTIONS

Assoc. Prof. Dr Juha Herkman, University of Helsinki (Finland)

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Abstract

By applying a new conceptual framework on populist dynamics, we investigated how parties were positioned and responded to by other parties in the European Parliamentary (EP) 2019 elections, and what their Twitter campaigns can tell us about the different forms of populism in the European and national public spheres. Our focus is on seven European countries across the field in which Twitter forms a central platform for political communication: the Netherlands, Germany, Finland, Italy, Spain, Ireland, and the UK.

Populism understood as an antagonism between us and not us was generally typical in political discourses. We witnessed antagonisms between different political camps such as populists against anti-populists, radical right against left-greens, Eurosceptics against pro-Europeans, pro-Brexiteers against anti-Brexiteers and (ethno-) nationalists against transnationalists or cosmopolitans. In discursive identity construction, Europhiles emphasised a common 'us' as Europeans, whereas the radical right promoted nativist exclusion of 'not us' in their identifications. However, according to our data, the radical right's agenda and rhetoric did not become mainstream among other political actors.

In our populism typology of fringe, mainstream and competing populisms we found that populism has remained the most 'fringe' in democratic corporatist countries in which radical right parties have challenged the hegemonic bloc of traditional consensual parties but not totally broken it. However, in these countries, populist antagonism has partially been mainstreamed alongside the radical right parties that have become normalised in their party fields, and especially in the Netherlands, populism as political logic seems to have become a mainstream way to construct political identities both on the right and left spectrums of the party field. In polarised-pluralist and liberal countries, populism seems to have become mainstream more easily as a way of promoting antagonist political communication. In the UK, the Brexit vote and the two-party system apparently led towards competing populism.

Biography of the presenter

JUHA HERKMAN is an Associate Professor of Media and Communication Studies at the University of Helsinki. He has studied and published extensively on the relationship between populism and media in various distinguished academic journals. Herkman has been a PI of several research projects related to the topic, for example, „Mainstreaming Populism in the 21st Century“ (MAPO, 2017–2021) funded by the Academy of Finland. Herkman is an author of „A Cultural Approach to Populism“ (Routledge, 2022).

HOW EFFICIENT AND COMMON IS POPULISM IN THE DIRECT ELECTION OF MAYORS?

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Abstract

Direct elections of mayors focus on personalities and their attempts to attract voters. Among many political instruments, populism may play a significant role. It is probable that candidates to the mayor positions give promises which they are not able to fulfill due to their limited power. However, there are no studies which would undertake to analyze how common populism actually is in the direct elections of mayors. The aim of my paper is to evaluate the scope of populism in the direct elections of mayors in 2023. For this purpose, I shall analyze those politicians who sought reelection and their main competitors. For this goal, I will use qualitative analysis of the programs of politicians.

Biography of the presenter

AUDRIS NARBUTAS holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the Institute of International Relations and Political Sciences and currently is a doctoral student at KTU.

FOOTBALL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY. 'US' AND 'THEY' IN THE SWISS NATIONAL TEAM

Prod. Dr Remzie Shahini Hoxhaj, University of Prishtina (Kosovo)

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Dr. Jeta Abazi, University of Prishtina (Kosovo)

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Abstract

In 2022, the World Football Championship held in Qatar served as a battle not only for football fans but also as questioning of national identities and patriotism. The National Football Swiss Team 'Schweizer Fussballnationalmannschaft' played against the Serbian national team in the tournament's group stage. Two of the main players of the Swiss national team, who are of Kosovar-Albanian origin, were the target of the media in three respective states. Each country had a different media coverage of former Albanian migrants of the 1990s. This paper aims to analyze disputes around these players. Their civic identity was suppressed, and their place of origin was highlighted. The paper will analyze the media outlets using both visuals and text. It will use three media in three countries and languages: Kosovo, Serbia, and Switzerland. It relies on the constitutional patriotism concept designed by Jürgen Habermas. It seeks to examine the data in a two-fold combination employing Critical Discourse Analysis and semiotics of the image. The research questions that are aimed to answer are: How has the ethnic background shaped media reporting in these three countries? And how have these players been portrayed, given the national-state differences?

Biography of the presenter

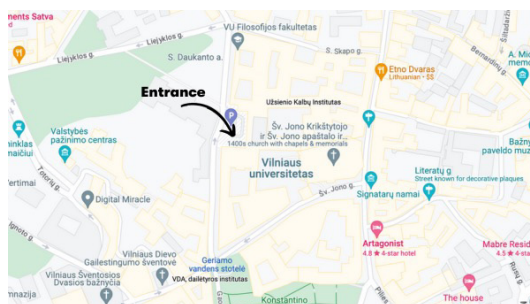
REMZIE SHAHINI-HOXHAJ is a Professor of Communication at the Department of Journalism at the University of Prishtina 'Hasan Prishtina'. She is the founder and director of the Media Institute at the University of Prishtina. She was a lecturer at the University of Applied Science Salzburg in Austria (2019–2021) and a visiting fellow at Dartmouth University (2017). Her research interests include the television and communication culture in transitional societies, media literacy and public relation. Since 2000, she has been involved in numerous international projects on education and human rights in Kosovo. Dr. Shahini-Hoxhaj completed her Ph.D. in Communication and Journalism at the University of Vienna, Austria (2014). She also holds a dual Master's degree in Intercultural Communication from Europa-Viadrina University, Frankfurt/Oder, Germany, and St. Kliment Ohridski University, Sofia, Bulgaria (2004). Her Bachelor's degree is in the German Language and Literature from the University of Prishtina (2001). Her research has been published in multiple peer-reviewed journals. She is the current President of the Kosovar Austrian Society (OEKG) and a Board Member of the European Communication and Culture Society (ESEC). She has received many awards for her work and is a mother of two. She fluently speaks Albanian, English, German and Serbo-Croatian.

Conference venue

Vilnius University (Universiteto str. 3), Theatre Hall (II floor, entrance from I floor) and Seminar Room 238 (I floor)

The old campus of the University is located in the old town of the city, close to the Cathedral Square and Simono Daukanto avenue, just next to the Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

The Theatre Hall is located on the 2nd floor of the University building, and can be accessed through the main entrance of the.



Lunch venues

For Nov 24 (Friday) we suggest "Grey" (Pilies str. 2)

For Nov 25 (Saturday) we suggest "Bernelių užėiga" (Pilies str. 10)

Other affordable places to have lunch close to the university:

Pilies Kepyklėlė (Pilies str. 19)

ETNO dvaras (Pilies str. 16)

Fiorentino (Universiteto str. 4)

Reception and dinner venue

The reception, Nov 24 (Friday) Theatre Hall (Universiteto str. 3, II floor, entrance from I floor)

The dinner, Nov. 25 (Saturday) 18.30–20.30 o'clock at the "Grey" restaurant (Pilies str. 2)

Transport from the airport to the city centre and old town

Getting from Vilnius airport to the city centre and the old town is easy by public transport:

Bus 88 Airport – City Centre – Europa Square (Europos aikštė). If you are staying in Vilnius old town, you should get off at Aušros vartai or MO muziejus stops (around 15 min ride).

Bus 3G Airport – City Centre – Fabijoniškės. If you need to go to Vilnius city centre, get off at Juozo Tumo Vaižganto stop (around 15–20 min ride).