FULL PAPER

Can it be hate if it is fun?
Discursive ensembles of hatred and laughter in
extreme right satire on Facebook

Kann es Hass sein, wenn es Spaß ist?
Diskursive Ensembles aus Hass und Gelächter in
extrem rechter Satire auf Facebook

Christian Schwarzenegger & Anna Wagner

Christian Schwarzenegger (Dr.), Department of Media, Knowledge and Communication, University of Augsburg, Universitaetsstr. 10, 86159 Augsburg, Germany; Contact: christian. schwarzenegger(at)phil.uni-augsburg.de

Anna Wagner (M.A.), Department of Media, Knowledge and Communication, University of Augsburg, Universitaetsstr. 10, 86159 Augsburg, Germany; Contact: anna.wagner(at)phil. uni-augsburg.de

FULL PAPER

Can it be hate if it is fun?
Discursive ensembles of hatred and laughter in extreme right satire on Facebook

Kann es Hass sein, wenn es Spaß ist?
Diskursive Ensembles aus Hass und Gelächter in extrem rechter Satire auf Facebook

Christian Schwarzenegger & Anna Wagner

Abstract: This paper explores the role of satirical pages and groups on Facebook as a means of a broader discourse strategy of mainstreaming extreme right political positions and populist propaganda. In a qualitative content analysis of six satirical pages and groups from four Western democracies, we examine both the original posts and the users' commentary and interactions. Taking a combined look on the disseminated social media contents and user interactions provides a more nuanced understanding of mainstreaming practices than examining one side alone. Results show that the original posts and the subsequent user interactions form a discursive ensemble, which in combination of satirical content and comment can at once cloak and unveil the political intent and can serve the mainstreaming strategy for extreme right positions by furthering radical narratives, stencils, and images.

Keywords: Political satire, extreme right, populism, mainstreaming, social media

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel untersucht die Rolle von Facebook-Seiten und Gruppen, die sich vorgeblich mit Satire beschäftigen, als ein Element der diskursiven Strategie des Mainstreaming von rechtsextremen Positionen und populistischer Propaganda in Social Media-Umgebungen. In einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse von sechs Satireseiten und -gruppen aus vier verschiedenen westlichen Ländern untersuchten wir sowohl die Originalposts als auch die User-Kommentare und -Interaktionen. Ein geschlossener Blick auf die verbreiteten Social-Media Inhalte und User-Interaktionen liefert ein detaillierteres Bild von Mainstreaming-Praktiken als es eine einseitige Betrachtung vermöge. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Originalposts und die anschließenden User-Diskussionen ein diskursives Ensemble bilden, das in Kombination der Mainstreaming-Strategie extremer rechter Positionen dienen kann, indem radikale Narrative, Schablonen und Bilder befördert werden. Das diskursive Ensemble aus satirischem Inhalt und Kommentaren kann dabei gleichermaßen die politischen Intentionen verbergen oder sichtbar machen.

Schlagwörter: Politische Satire, Extreme Rechte, Populismus, Mainstreaming, Social Media

1. Introduction

Extreme right parties and their respective politics have become growingly prominent in Western societies, if not around the globe (Pisoiu & Ahmed, 2015). Feasting on a climate of fear elicited by linking the most recent 'refugee crisis' to terrorism and a purported proliferation of Islamization of Western societies, extreme right political actors profit from the downsides to globalization and modernization by using the insecurities of the masses to bolster their radical worldviews (Bornschier, 2018) continuously. These "dark clouds over democracy" (Alvares & Dahlgren, 2016), are accompanied by an extreme right agenda to pushing public debate towards more extreme right positions and "to normalize" (Wodak, 2018) them, "that involves previously taboo ideas, frames, and practices becoming the new 'common sense'" (Kallis, 2013, p. 221). This push towards the right, however, is not just a situational response to the ongoing situation, but also reflects communicative efforts and discourse strategies of the populist right. Cammaerts (2018)—in line with other authors—has described strategies used to the end of moving boundaries of acceptable speech in public discourses towards more radical stances and to normalize the radical right view as the "*mainstreaming* of extreme right-wing populism" (p. 7). The effectiveness of such mainstreaming strategy is thus less to be seen on the individual level of people being susceptible for right-wing agitation and thus drifting towards the right and adopting political attitudes but rather on the level of discourse at large and regarding how matters are debated in society.

Social media are essential tools for these communicative efforts and as a means for the dissemination of disinformation or radical political views. Due to their networked nature, low threshold for participation and direct mode of communication through which citizens can easily be reached social media can be ideal vessels for the spread of a populist political agenda (Krämer, 2017). Hence, the goal of extreme right populists' employment of social media platforms is to mainstream their radical positions, i.e., make them more accessible and acceptable. Ultimately, mainstreaming can contribute to nationalist, anti-immigration, and racist perspectives becoming normalized in the public sphere. To this end, various discursive strategies (Cammaerts, 2018), are adapted to the logic of the platforms chosen for mainstreaming purposes. Among these strategies and particularly prominent on social media is the use of humorous content such as satire and memes. Under the guise of joking and laughing hate speech can be obscured, radical positions can appear legitimate and can find broader visibility and widespread circulation among social media users (Doerr, 2017; Wagner & Schwarzenegger, 2018). In this way, more extreme positions might find broader resonance beyond confined circles of a knowing few. Extreme right satire can thus function as a means of infiltrating public debate with images, ideas, and ideologies in an ostensibly non-ideological way. Doing so can help propagate the extremist cause while cloaking the political agenda behind the allegedly satirical critique. In this paper, we set out to explore the contents of extreme right satirical pages and groups on Facebook. We consider the contents together with the posts and the user interactions as a 'discursive ensemble:' We analyze how these interac-

tions work together with the original contents posted and how users reproduce, negotiate and amplify or contradict the extreme right populist contents and interpretative patterns offered to them. We do not, however, consider the user interactions as caused by the initial posts or an effect of the satirical content. Rather they complement and frame the communicative effort, and they can provide reading instructions for other users, relate the content to other sources and propaganda material or provide a template for angry and hostile reactions towards those persons or events portrayed in the satire. As the comment sections can be curated and reactions can be deleted at any time, the interactions are not a mere representation of reactions. The initial contents and the interactions with them in combination are to be considered part of the mainstreaming strategy.

2. Mainstreaming of extreme right positions, populism, and the role of the media

The extreme right is not a homogeneous or monolithic block but an umbrella term to cover a myriad of populist, neo-fascist, white supremacist, racist or Identitarian groups. Also, the expressions used for describing these more extreme advocates of nationalist politics vary, with notions including *the radical right*, *far right*, *ultra-right* and *extreme right* being partly used interchangeably or as a gradual difference for positioning them in a left to right spectrum. Regardless of the terms applied, a certain skepticism towards them and their populist means is a consensus in academic discourse (Beaufort, 2018; Cammaerts, 2018; Downing, 2001; Waisbord, 2018; Wodak & Krzyżanowski, 2017). This critical academic observation is among other things because extreme rights try to exert political influence by positioning themselves against multiculturalism and immigrants, emphasizing ethnocentrism and perspectives of nationalist and cultural separation, and reinforcing an alleged trench between 'the people' and 'the establishment.' A foundational pillar of all extreme right agitation is, according to Fuchs (2016), to personalize social problems and "inscribe them biologically and/or culturally into individuals and groups. It uses specific naturalised and essentialised characteristics that are assigned to belong to what is conceived of as enemy groups" (p. 188). With the increased popularity of extreme right parties not only in Western societies but various countries around the globe, narratives developed and promulgated by extreme right groups have indeed turned out to impact the respective political agendas causing a shift of political positions to the right in the entire spectrum of democratic political parties (Han, 2015; Witteveen, 2017). Despite differing political systems and conditions, this pattern is observable in various countries where extreme right populists have gained strength (Cammaerts, 2018).

Mainstreaming can be understood as the meta-process that describes a slow shift of public discourse towards more radical stances: over the course of time political positions are legitimized that had been deemed inappropriate or immoral in former times and topics such as national identity, ethnicity, cultural homogeneity or immigration are moved from the margins to the center of political discourses (Kallis, 2013). Another reading of the term mainstreaming, however, focuses more on the actual strategic application of mainstreaming, which is "situated at a symbolic/ discursive level" (Cammaerts, 2018, p. 7). In this article and the study

477

at hand, we understand mainstreaming as a discursive strategy that is employed by extreme right actors to push the boundaries of the speakable, which can contribute to the said overall shift towards more radical positions.

As a discursive practice, mainstreaming does not necessarily equal a broader range of the extreme right group's positions and messages but instead refers to the proliferation of specific topics (in the sense of agenda setting) and the narratives, frames, and angles, under which these are discussed. More specifically, the strategy of mainstreaming includes inter alia the propagation of specific (extreme) terms and connotations, the use and reinterpretation of whole semantic complexes, a simplification of complex political situations by focusing on a few topics, a playing with and breaking of taboos while at the same time downplaying the transgression, the appropriation and recontextualization of political demands for the own purposes (Kallis, 2013; Wodak, 2018). It is always aimed at asserting extreme positions and bringing them from the margins of public discourse to its center.

Mainstreaming in social media environments goes further than the active contributions made by an individual or collective actor. Also, the anticipated reactions and calculated resonance are part of the discursive strategy. Eliciting emotional responses and interactions by supporters can naturally propagate the cause. Besides, also provoking critique can serve the goal as the critical reactions bring attention and visibility to a theme because to dismiss or correct false claims, rumors or disinformation also means to address these issues (Cammaerts, 2018). Furthermore, critique and counter-speech can also contribute to the self-victimizing narrative of the far right as an oppressed minority (Wodak, 2017) or can be used to ridicule the critics (Drüeke & Zobl, 2016). Mainstreaming as a strategy is successful regarding its goals when it cumulates in a slow shift towards extreme right political views and topics pushing the boundaries of what can be said, and gradually reconfiguring the reservoir of public expression (Önnerfors, 2017).

2.1. Mainstreaming extreme right views through populism

Populism "that articulates 'the people' in an exclusionary manner" (Cammaerts, 2018, p. 7) plays a pivotal role as both a means and a catalyst of mainstreaming practices. Although populist strategies are by no means exclusively applied by the extreme right (Engesser, Ernst, Esser, & Büchel, 2016), populism lies at the very heart of their political program and their communicative game plan: "The contemporary radical right is, in its majority, a populist radical right" (Betz, 2018, p. 86).

Populist communicative strategies, as extreme right groups and parties incorporate them, commonly entail narratives of the people being oppressed by the establishment (Engesser et al., 2016; Krämer, 2014, 2017; Wodak, 2017). This anti-elitism, coupled with an ostensible people-centrism and the promised restitution of an allegedly lost power to the people constitute the carrying columns of political populism in the argumentation of the extreme right (Ernst, Engesser, Büchel, Blassnig, & Esser, 2017). To purport their nationalist ideologies, extreme right populist actors emphasize a (national) collective identity by creating enemy images and constructing cleavages between the national in-group and (a mostly foreign) supposed outgroup (Wodak, 2017). In sum, extreme right groups employ

populist strategies that include *emphasizing the sovereignty of the people*, *advocating for the people*, *attacking the elites*, *ostracizing others*, and *invoking the heartland* (Engesser et al., 2016).

2.2. The role of (social) media for mainstreaming extreme right positions

Despite their constant criticism of legacy media and thus somewhat paradoxically, media is key to the enforcement of extreme rights' populist agenda. In an era of mediatized politics and deeply mediatized life-worlds, extreme right agitators make use of various media technologies for communicating and distributing their political goals and radical agenda (Block & Negrine, 2017; Waisbord, 2003). The "media-savvy communication strategies" (Cammaerts, 2018, p. 13) they apply helped them gain momentum in political discourses and contributed to their election success—with many mass media outlets willingly providing a platform for their radical stances (Cammaerts, 2018; Ellinas, 2018; Forchtner, Krzyzanowski, & Wodak, 2013).

Since populism as a strategy is not only employed by politicians but is also adopted by mass media organizations, the extreme rights' populism might coincide with and be enforced by a *media populism* (Krämer, 2014) that entails the production of in-group versus out-group narratives, narratives supporting a criticism of the elites, an emotionalization of political debates, and so forth. This plays into the hands of extreme right actors, as "the media can affect political demand by setting the agenda on or framing key issues such as immigration and crime, helping legitimize a political space in which the radical right can thrive" (Ellinas, 2018, p. 269). We thus argue that, among other conditional factors, it is this media populism that helps the extreme right to mainstream their positions with some mass media outlets readily adopting populist communication strategies and unwillingly functioning as a mouthpiece of the extreme rights' strategic orientation.

Another vital instrument for normalizing extreme right political positions through populist communication is social media technologies that allow for communication aloof from traditional media (Krämer, 2017). Social media platforms not only enable reaching 'the people' through a direct form of communication, they also entail a potential for entertainment, emotionalization, and personalization, and allow for transnational connection and organization of the extreme right's ideologies due to their network character (Doerr, 2017; Ernst et al., 2017; Krämer, 2017). Indeed, social media technologies have been shown to contribute to the formation of *transnational network publics* among extreme right activists across Europe (Doerr, 2017), who are sharing the common objective of opposing refugees and immigrants and "have formed populist fronts to combat [allegedly] "illegal" immigrants" (Waisanen, 2012, p. 233). Social media as communicative spaces allow populists to express their ideological stances and disseminate their political messages (Engesser et al., 2016) including derogatory and discriminatory radical opinions and even overt hate speech (Ben-David & Matamoros-Fernandez, 2016).

The use of social media allows the extreme right to reach various audiences for various purposes implementing their goal of mainstreaming their political positions in different segments of public debate:

For once, the extreme right has successfully established an alternative media sphere on social and in digital media, in which they can spread their propagandist ideology and conspiracy theories, without running through the filters of legacy media. Extreme right social network pages and groups with different contents (including humor) offer an opportunity of participation, discussion, and communitization for their political followers, in which the political positions can be legitimized and cultivated. As they create "an environment wherein individuals can socialize themselves into a right-wing populist worldview" (Krämer, 2017, p. 1303), they can also potentially be contributing to a (further) radicalization of users already close to their political agenda or potentially sympathizing with their positions (Johnson, 2018; Lewis & Marwick, 2017). This radicalization might happen both in the sense of a participation in violent, radical political movements as it has been applied in several studies (e.g., Aly, Macdonald, Jarvis, & Chen, 2016; Caiani, 2017; Caiani & Della Porta, 2018; Koehler, 2014; Pisoiu & Ahmed, 2015) or in the broader, more traditional sense of the term as a person's development towards adopting more radical political stances (Meleagrou-Hitchens & Kaderbhai, 2017).

Further, extreme right actors try not only to reach social media users already receptive to their political positions but also those who are further away from their political views. To this end, they increasingly make use of popular communicative strategies such as humor and entertainment on social media. As satire also contains elements, which mirror populist approaches (Rolfe, 2017), political actors including agitators "successfully co-opt the vehicle of satire for their own purposes" (Higgie, 2017, p. 73). Since positioning themselves against an alleged unitary block of "the establishment," political and cultural elites and mainstream media are one of their major goals, satire on social media can be considered the perfect strategy for entertaining the masses, disguising hate speech, and implementing their political agenda of criticizing the establishment. A breach of taboo, very dark humor and openly contesting boundaries of free speech can be appealing for "rebellious minds" and people who consider themselves critical thinkers without necessarily having a political agenda beforehand. Offensive jokes can be very obvious but also highly effective means of cloaking racism and hate speech (Topinka, 2017). Topinka (2017) thus argues that "rather than unmasking obscured racist online ideologies, scholars must also examine how racism flourishes while hiding in plain sight," i.e., racist discourses in participatory media environments.

3. Political satire and the mainstreaming of extreme right populism

Political satire can be an artistic means to voice critique, explore boundaries and contest the limits of free speech—while usually positioned against the politically powerful (Behrmann, 2002; Brummack, 1971; Simpson, 2003). It thus combines elements of critique and political positioning with elements of humor and entertainment, and moreover entails the often instrumentalized populist notion of the people against the establishment. In the last couple of years, satire and political entertainment media content, in general, have become increasingly popular among both citizens and politicians, due to changing media environments, and the mediatization of politics (Baym, 2007; Dörner & Vogt, 2017). Political satire

in the mass media such as satirical TV shows or magazines have become a prominent subject of news coverage, and satirical media outlets have grown into a trusted source of information, especially among younger people (Feldman, 2016).

However, political satire is not only limited to mass media content, but also increasingly prominent on social media platforms where it functions as a catalyst for interactive communication, with users themselves engaging in the production of satirical content and discussion of politics-related satirical media content (Crittenden, Hopkins, & Simmons, 2011; Jones, 2017; Rahimi, 2015). Even though political satire is predominantly associated with pro-democratic criticism and thus seen in a somewhat positive light, rare existent studies indicate that extreme right groups employ political satire such as cartoons, memes, and caricatures on social media as well to assert their political goals (Doerr, 2017; Punathambekar, 2015). Studies show that extreme right groups strategically use racist humor as a rhetorical device and—similar to other forms of satire (Ferrari, 2017)—stimulates interaction, discussion, and contributions in the same vein among people in participatory media spaces (Hylton, 2017; Topinka, 2017).

As political satire has been shown to impact people's political participation, interpersonal communication, and political efficacy under specific circumstances (Becker, 2014; Chen, Gan, & Sun, 2017; Landreville, Holbert, & LaMarre, 2010); as it has an active entertainment component to it and legitimizes forms of ridicule and making-fun-of, extreme right populists have an interest in using satire. The use of political satire on social media is particularly convenient to extreme rights for several reasons: For once, political satire is apt to spark emotions among the users (Bessant, 2016), playing into the strategy of emotionalization frequently employed by extreme right populists (Salmela & Scheve, 2017). Second, social media constitute a communicative space where political talk among citizens is frequently taking place (Wright, Graham, & Jackson, 2016) and political satire has been shown to contribute to interpersonal communication through the evocation of emotions (Landreville et al., 2010; Lee & Jang, 2016). Third, people who are especially susceptible to populism tend to have an entertainment-focused media diet and deliberately select media contents entailing the narrative of the people versus the establishment (Hameleers, Bos, & Vreese, 2017). Fourth, social media as platforms with a strong focus on visuals allow for the use of simple, understandable and catchy imagery in the form of memes and caricatures to transport political messages and reach social media users (Wagner & Schwarzenegger, 2018). Fifth, political satire enjoys trust from the audience, disguises political messages to a certain extent through humor and laughter, and allows speaking of the unspeakable while concealing discriminatory contents such as hate speech. Whereas openly racist notions might be rejected in the public, racist humor has the potential to prompt people to adopt certain narratives and expressions, leading them to be "more compelled to indulge in the "forbidden fruit" of racism" (Pérez, 2017, p. 957). The combination of potentially offensive social media content and commending interactions with it can further legitimate the joke and make it seem acceptable to laugh about it (because others did so as well) or to consider it an appropriate satirical critique of an actual political or social ill. Sixth, for those users who are already sharing the extreme right political positions, racist humor can be used for purposes of bonding

and unifying through the exchange of and discussion about "'politically incorrect' dark, offensive & twisted humor" (Topinka, 2017). Humor allows winking distancing from any actual offensive content as well as to establish a community of insiders who know how to read the political message beyond the joke. In sum, political satire on social media, by nature, is an entirely appropriate resource for the populist purposes of disseminating their extreme right political agenda, reaching different audiences and establishing certain views of the world as allegedly normal.

4. Exploring mainstreaming in satirical pages and groups on social media: Analytical perspective and scope of the study

Bringing together the argumentation outlined in the preceding paragraphs, we consider extreme right satirical pages and groups on social media communicative spaces, in which the discursive practices of mainstreaming radical right positions can be observed and analyzed in a specific setting at a certain point in time. In our study, we thus set out to examine the communication and user interaction taking place in satirical Facebook pages and groups as one potential means through which the discursive strategy of mainstreaming is pursued.

Creators and administrators of such pages and groups offer users contents comprising extreme right political stances in the guise of satire and provide them with specific frames and patterns of interpretation. Users, on the other hand, regardless of their political background or experience with extreme right positions, can discuss and converse about postings and topics in the commentary section, react towards postings by the extreme right actors and other users and thereby follow or dismiss the interpretative patterns offered to them. Their reactions and interactions complement the communicative practices and provide reading instructions or templates for possible responses. We are interested, in how far the wording, reasoning, and mindset expressed in extreme right satirical Facebook pages and groups resonates in the comment sections, in how far it is related to other political sources or propagandist content. We are further interested in whether critique for openly offensive humor is voiced in the comments and whether such critique is then commented on, countered or ridiculed. As the groups and pages are potentially curated spaces where administrators can also delete and block content, which they object, we cannot regard the comment section an authentic representation of user reactions. However, this is also why we can assume that comments are regarded as acceptable utterances by the administrators. Since both creators/ administrators and users are involved in the success of mainstreaming radical positions, narratives, and stencils, we aim at intellectually and analytically combining both perspectives in the current study, focusing on both the original content posted in the pages and groups and the comments posted by the users as a 'discursive ensemble.'

5. Method

We conducted a qualitative content analysis of posted content and comments on these posts on six satirical Facebook pages and groups from Germany, Austria, Canada, and the US. A decision to analyze content from various countries was

made because right-wing mainstreaming is not nationally confined but happening in many different countries in Europe and beyond. The perspective on different countries allows identifying commonalities and peculiarities as well as reconstructing hints towards transnational networking among right-leaning social media activists and users (Doerr, 2017). Since the pairs Germany/Austria and US/Canada each share linguistic and cultural commonalities, they are particularly apt for an analysis of mainstreaming practices, which take place at the discursive and symbolic level. Even though all selected countries share similarities regarding their respective political systems and political culture, they do vary in the extent to which extreme right political positions have been normalized within public discourses. Whereas Austria has a long tradition of modern right-wing populism and a strong established extreme right party, the US experienced a more recent push towards radical stances with the Tea Party Movement and later the rise and election of Donald Trump as US president (Backes, 2018). Germany and Canada, on the contrary, have rising but comparatively weak extreme right parties (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Backes, 2018), with none of them being represented in the parliaments at the time of the study. As mainstreaming and a shift towards radical political discourse can be observed in all countries to a certain extent, we do expect similarities in the patterns of mainstreaming. However, we also assume those countries with a more established and institutionalized tendency towards extreme right positions in public discourse, namely Austria and the US, to have more visible traces of mainstreaming strategies (such as more explicit language) than the other two countries.

5.1. Sample

Pages and groups were retrieved by inserting combinations of the words (political) satire, right wing, nationalism, (anti)liberalism, humor, and several thematic keywords such as refugees, crisis, immigrants, or Islam in both German and English into the Facebook search option. A page or group was included if it explicitly or implicitly stated political satire as its primary purpose, satirical content was frequently posted on the Facebook walls, and extreme right political positions could be inferred from the information text. The final sample of pages and groups included the Austrian page *Verein Freunde der Tagespolitik* (translated: Club for friends of day-to-day politics), the German group *Freie Satire* (translated: Free satire), the German page *Politische Satire* (translated: Political satire), the Canadian page *Old Stock Canadian* and US American pages *AltLibertarian* and *Laughing at Stupid Things Liberals Say*. Except for the German group *Freie Satire* that had rather few participants who were nevertheless fond of posting, the pages and groups had between 3,225 to 80,445 participants or followers at the time of analysis.

5.2. Selection criteria

The posts and comments were selected for analysis in a two-step procedure: In a first step, all original posts on the Facebook pages and groups published between August and September 2017 as well as the accompanying comments distributed

by the Facebook users were retrieved. In a second step, comments and responses to these comments posted beneath the pages' original posts were counted. If less than twenty comments were posted below an original post, all comments were included in the content analysis. If more than twenty comments were posted below the original post, however, we selected the first five and the five most recent for analysis to limit the amount of data. In the process of counting the comments, those that merely consisted of emojis or tags of people were omitted and excluded from the analysis. The only group in the sample, German group *Freie Satire* was not treated differently from the pages. Even though in principle, all participants in the group were allowed to post something, the majority of the posts stemmed from one administrator, and comments were analyzed regardless of the person posting.

5.3. Coding procedure

To analyze the original posts on the Facebook pages/ groups and the users' comments in combination, we again followed a two-step procedure: In the first step, only the original posts were analyzed by applying a visual and textual grounded theory coding approach with several rounds of inductively searching for patterns until a theoretical interpretation could be condensed. In the cycle of open coding, the two authors read the collected material and identified relevant broad categories of the phenomena. Subsequently, we made connections among these categories and highlighted posts corresponding to the codes employing QDA software. This method allowed identifying overarching patterns in the original posts while at the same time analyzing particular posts. Finally, we delved deeper into those connections to identify central categories for the analysis.

In a second step, we went back into the material to simultaneously look at the original posts and the users' comments, and apply the categories retrieved in the first step to the users' comments. In the course of this, further categories of reaction and interaction such as, e.g., the adoption of the communicative style (serious vs. satirical) was developed applying the same coding procedure as in the first step. We also coded whether the comment was referring to the original post or another comment or commenter, as the discussions would also unfold between commenters. We coded when users did relate topics to current affairs or political events and when other sources or memes were referenced in the comments.

6. Findings

6.1. Strategies for mainstreaming extreme right positions: Analysis of the original posts

The analysis of the original posts revealed that both serious and satirical contents were posted under the umbrella of satirical Facebook pages and groups. Hence, satire was used as a label to the pages and groups to disguise their actual political contents in the first place. Moreover, in case satirical contents were posted they also functioned as a cover-up of extremist political positions including the dis-

crimination against minorities. Within the pages' and groups' satirical and serious posts, we identified the use of populist strategies including the *ostracization of others*, *attacks against the elites*, and *advocacy for the people* (Engesser et al., 2016). Pages and groups turned against the political establishment in satirical form. In the case of one post published by the Austrian page (see Figure 1), a campaign slogan of the Austrian Green Party (This is green) is mimicked to equal Green politics to racism against Austrian natives. This satirical poster seizes the narrative of the elites who would neglect their people (*us*) and only serve the interests of foreigners (*them*). The meme is combined with a posted message in which a pun referring to "Allah" establishes a link between the unnamed *them* and Muslim immigration. Also posts, which derogated minorities and some of society's most marginalized groups (e.g., homosexuals, transgender, migrants; see Figure 2), were typical contents across all pages and the group in the material.

Figure 1. Satirical election poster ascribed to the Green Party and shared by the Austrian page *Verein Freunde der Tagespolitik* on September 15, 2017. The poster text translates to "Racism against Austrians: This is Green." The description text written by *Verein Freunde der Tagespolitik* uses a pun with the word "Allah" and translates to "That's the last straw, what is allowed to rampage in our parliament."

Figure 2. Satirical meme posted by the US American page *AltLibertarian*.

Furthermore, a clear narrative of self-victimization was purported in the form that extreme right supporters are staged as oppressed minorities and victims of the new "liberal" ideas and values, which would ultimately rob them of their (national) identities (Figure 3). In sum, it becomes evident from the analysis of the original posts that creators and administrators of satirical Facebook pages and groups use them for promoting extreme right narratives, stencils, and images (see Wagner & Schwarzenegger, 2018, for a more detailed description of the analysis). As described above, after the initial analysis of contents shared by the pages/group we then analyzed the combination of post and comments and how these were related and played together, supported or questioned another and how this may contribute to the discursive strategy of mainstreaming.

Figure 3. Meme and corresponding comments posted on the Canadian page *OldStockCanadian*.

## 6.2. Connecting the dots between posts and comments: A discursive ensemble

As expected, the mechanisms of mainstreaming employed by the extreme right groups echoed in the users' commentary. For instance, one original post on the Austrian page (see Figure 1) received 14 comments, which widely addressed the post in a serious tone and supported the message of the satirical picture. According to the commenters, this would be a prime example of "typical green hatred and hustle against the natives" or "the sad truth," while asking "who votes for those psychos?" Several users shared memes in the comments, referring to the end of the Green party, which would come in the next elections. In one post a link to a You-Tube campaign video by the Austrian right-wing populist party FPÖ was shared—the message in the video neatly responded to the alleged Green party "racism" as FPÖ promises to preserve the Austria *we* would know from our youth and prevent *us* from becoming foreigners in the own country. The combination of posting and comments constitutes a discursive ensemble, which elevates the satirical content to political commentary, situates it in the political struggle between the populist right and the "treacherous" political establishment and suggests the populist politicians as a potential solution. It was a common pattern across pages that populist tropes would be emphasized and populist alternatives to the alleged status quo propagated. The various concepts of the enemy reproduced by the users are, for instance, reflected in a comment posted on US American page *AltLibertarian* below a cartoon on the purported Islamization of Western societies: "In the western world no one pushes harder than the left for immigration from low IQ populations from the third world" (September 29, 2017). The rhetorical othering of perceived out-groups of the "common people" forms a unified blend, in which "the left," "liberals," "Muslim invaders" and all those deemed "abnormal" merged into the undifferentiated people's enemy. Whereas satire could voice differentiated criticism, the messages in these groups lack nuance and propagate and reinforce the persistent narrative of the oppressed in-group and the vile out-group. Users seem to have identified with the constructed group of disadvantaged and oppressed citizens and voice the concerns and discontent with their situation in the comments. A user complained posting on the US American page *AltLibertarian*: "Angers the crap out of me how I see this happening and everyone shames me for saying otherwise" (September 26, 2017). Similar to mechanisms described as "redpilling" (Lewis & Marwick, 2017) as part of the extreme right populists' agenda, some user posts' showed tendencies to think of themselves as awakened while opposing groups would be asleep or naïve sheep.

The users as a community of awakened or knowing people would strongly reflect across the material. Especially catchy phrases and name-calling in the satirical posts were willingly taken up by the users and applied on several occasions, not only below the specific post. For instance, when male politicians were called "princess," or pages and groups created puns with the names of politicians, users would integrate those in their comments to join in the satirical attacks. Name-calling and derogatory labels for objected groups used in the satirical setting did not necessarily originate there, and thus we cannot discern from our data that users adopted them from there. Nevertheless, the use of the same vilifications,

puns, and metaphors can establish a sense of belonging and community of connoisseurs who can decipher the contents accurately. The satire may obscure the malicious intent of some of the postings, but it does not operate with a code difficult to break or jargon only accessible to an inner core, but instead allows identifying the message and feeling adept, while maintaining some secrecy; as Topinka (2017) describes, hateful humor allows hiding in plain sight.

Across the different pages, we found that the administrators would eventually engage with some of the rare counter-voices. For instance, when a satirical post about France being Islamized is challenged by an apparently French user on the US American page *AltLibertarian*, the administrator would resort to the joking character of the post and cover behind satirical exaggeration, while still emphasizing the political vision of the post, as France would only not be so far "yet" (Figure 4). But not only between administrators and users but also among users we could identify this communicative pattern. In rare instances, when users expressed concerns that the satire would be too rude or extreme, others would refer to the freedom of art and expression and resort to the page's purpose of fun: „It is a satirical site, people. It is just supposed to be fun" (September 15, 2017).

Figure 4. Meme and respective commentary on the page *AltLibertarian* illustrating rare counter-voices and the subsequent resort to humor.
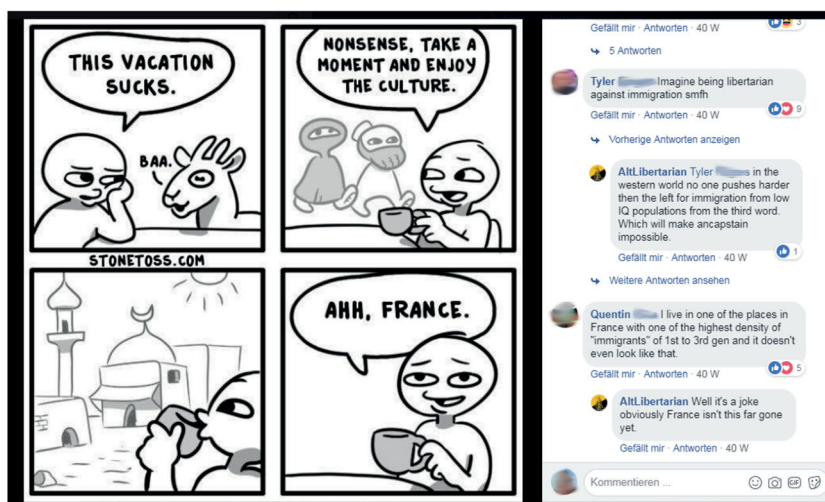
6.2.1 Satire as activism and attitude

It is not only the extreme right narratives and communicative templates resonating in the user comments, but the discursive ensemble of posts and comments also showed coherence regarding the communicative style and general attitude towards the political topics under discussion. We already discussed that users would often regard the posts on pages and in the group as a serious political commentary and respond emotionally, often furious against the satirically portrayed. Be-

sides these instances, we could also identify a typical pattern of users who would also resort to satirical efforts themselves and replicate the satirical style in their articulation. In Figure 5, the US American page *Laughing at Stupid Things Liberals Say* transforms a widespread basis of a meme (optimist view, pessimist view combined with some other view) into an anti-feminist attack. The users would then proceed with the same logic of the joke turning it against other typical adversary groups of the extreme right, i.e., based on ethnicity and the example of Black Lives Matter, sexual orientation with the LGBT-community and legacy media, namely CNN. Other users would reproduce the satirical implications in the original post by creating their own memes, cartoons and photoshopped satirical images or embedding already existing ones (see Figure 6). This again speaks for a sense of belonging and bonding within the user communities. It also suggests that twisted humor, ridicule, and denigration of others are integral to their perceptions of and perspective on political issues. In line with Ferrari's (2017) findings, users of the pages and groups seem to employ satire as a form of activism to position them in line with the original post's political intent while at the same time participating in the propagated culture and aiming to contribute to a proliferation of their then more openly articulated political ambitions. In line with populist political communication strategies, this would often include resisting the oppression by the establishment (Figure 3).

Figure 5. Meme and respective commentary posted on the page *Laughing at Stupid Things Liberals Say* illustrating how users follow and further the logic of the joke made in the post.

Figure 6. Meme showing German Chancellor Angela Merkel that is responded to by another similar meme depicting Angela Merkel posted in the group *Free Satire*.

6.2.2 Uncovering the covered: Overt hate speech in users' commentary

The findings suggest that the narratives and communicative styles offered by the pages and groups are not simply reproduced or adopted by the users, but can even be amplified and pushed further towards the extreme. The analysis of the posts indicates that while their satirical content is often offensive and hostile towards the supposed enemies, overt hate speech directed against these enemies was rare and remained hidden under the "highly obvious and highly effective" (Topinka, 2017) cloak of humor in the original posts. Users, on the contrary, would veil this cloak in their commentaries, and even further these attacks by articulating their hatred in the form of direct insults and death wishes. This amplification of hate is illustrated by a comment posted below a meme making fun of Muslim members of the LGBTQ community on the US American page *Laughing at Stupid Things Liberals Say*: "They are incredibly stupid. I guess they'll enjoy being chucked off a nice high roof" (September 25, 2017). The commentary refers to common imaginaries of the heinous killings of LGBT people by ISIS, thus highlighting the ultimate consequence of what the condemned lifestyle may bring; as a result, paradoxically wishing upon the "stupid" others what the user allegedly profoundly rejects. Although the targets of attack—mostly individual political actors, immigrants, and the aforementioned 'strangers on the inside' such as homosexuals—remain largely the same in the original posts and the users' commentary, commenters push the hate speech to new limits by willingly picking up the cues and making them more explicit.

In some cases, we even observed a spiral of escalation in the users' comments with users seemingly participating in a competition of hate speech, coming up with even more brutal commentary, measuring who would go further in their insults (see Figure 7 where users try to trump each other in insulting Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau). In sum, these findings parallel those of Ben-David

and Matamoros-Fernandez (2016), which suggested that discrimination on Facebook pages of extreme right political parties is merely implied and "then taken up by their followers who use overt hate speech in the comment space" (p. 1167). It is thus again the analytical look on the discursive ensemble of the posts and comments in combination that helps understand the intentions, the dominant reading in the group and the implications of satirical content beyond the actual post.

Figure 7. Meme and commentary are illustrating a spiral of escalation on the page *OldStockCanadian*.

7. Discussion

The study at hand investigated the discursive strategy of *mainstreaming* (Cammaerts, 2018) and how social media environments dedicated to satirical and humorous contents are employed as part of this communicative strategy to propagate tropes of the extreme right, cloaked by their allegedly humorous nature. Doing so, we considered the initial postings on satirical Facebook pages and groups and the user interactions related to them as parts of a discursive ensemble, which would contribute to the mainstreaming strategy.

As we could elaborate in the theoretical discussion, the elicited reactions and critical responses to the original posts can be an anticipated part of the communicative engagement in social media for the extreme right actors. While satire and humor can provide useful cover for hatred, the interaction of and with users can provide cues on how users are or should be decoding and engaging with different levels of satirical criticism or outright propaganda, and can even call for radical measures in the guise of satire. We conducted a qualitative content analysis of users' comments on six satirical pages and groups from Germany, Austria, Canada, and the US to investigate in how far the interpretative patterns offered by the pages and groups are adopted, questioned or amplified by their users. The findings showed that comments support the populist narratives and stencils the pages and groups employ in their posts. Attacks against the political and media estab-

491

lishment, against constructed outgroups such as immigrants, ethnical or sexual minorities and political opponents, as well as the narrative of an oppressed people resonate in the commentaries and are in some cases furthered in the comments. Through our methodological design, we did not aim to identify the coherence between posts and comments and effects of the posts on the users. Thus, it is important to state that we did not simply assume to observe the imitative action on the users' side. Instead, we need to be aware that the pages and groups we investigated do not exist in a void and reproduce and swirl up existing tropes from the extreme right media sphere. Results also show, however, that users by no means remain passive recipients of the political narratives, stencils, and attitudes. Rather than being merely an audience, users engage in the furthering and transforming of the satirical and non-satirical statements. Users not only repeat these contents and contribute to their circulation, but also reinforce and expand them by adding their own satirical media contents.

Regarding contents and comments as parts of a discursive ensemble highlights the importance to further scrutinize the complex entanglements between social media pages and their users. Through the discursive ensemble of content and comments the hidden political intent can both be cloaked—as it purportedly can't be hate if it is fun—or unveiled, through the use of overt hate speech or relating the contents to serious political commentary, referencing propagandistic media outlets or presenting populist politics and parties as alternatives. The use of hate speech seems particularly problematic since open hate speech can contribute to a culture of hatred on these platforms: Users confirm and reinforce each other's hate commentary in the extreme right satirical pages and groups thus making interventions and counterarguments by users with contrary views unlikely (see Leonhard, Rueß, Obermaier & Reinemann in this issue). Our findings also support that the topics and overall narratives in both the contents of the groups and the users' commentary were stable and steady regardless of current events. Mainstreaming of extreme right positions works as a permanent, persistent, and repetitive beat composed by various voices instead of consisting of a single crescendo. The focus on the discursive ensemble thus made visible that taking a combined look on disseminated social media contents and user interactions provides a more nuanced understanding of mainstreaming practices than examining one side alone. Overall, the differences between the countries we expected regarding the degree of normalization of extreme right positions and the explicitness of their contents were hardly visible in the analysis. On the contrary, we found striking similarities in the topics, tropes, styles, and modes of communication used within the pages and groups, which might hint at a mutual/ similar orientation towards extreme right actors and a shared 'social media language' or digital culture. Although we only found rare signs of actual transnational networking in the form of links or cross-references, it seems plausible to assume that the phenomenon we observed is translocal and as such, deserves further attention concerning its network character and synergies.

Visual satire in the form of memes and fake images appears to be particularly useful and a popular strategy of mainstreaming. According to Shifman (2014), online political memes function as a means to ignite persuasion, action, and dis-

cussion on the audience site, making them especially useful for extreme right groups in participatory media. Our study also suggests that mainstreaming in social media entertainment contexts might be particularly dangerous for another reason: Users appear to gain benefits from participating in a community and jointly making fun of outgroups, which might further strengthen the ties to extreme right positions. This assumption is illustrated by the fact that users, on the one hand, engage in competitions of hate speech and goad each other mutually, and on the other hand become defensive when critical remarks of other users threaten the conversational culture and political stances of the groups and pages.

While our study, in general, succeeds in snapshotting the discursive ensemble of mainstreaming processes of extreme right positions on social media, several limitations curtail the informative value of our findings. The meta-process of mainstreaming describes a slow shift of public discourse towards more radical stances. With the analysis of Facebook groups and pages, we merely focused on one particular platform and thus just a small snippet of a discursive ensemble in a temporary state at one point in time. Discourses are however characterized by their temporal dimension and change over time. A single static analysis of contents at a given time lacks this processual dimension and can thus not grasp the proclaimed shift. A longterm or diachronic perspective on the discursive ensembles in the pages and groups we have scrutinized would allow comprehending better the discursive dynamics taking place within the extreme right groups but also their interrelation with other discourse arenas.

Furthermore, a transmedia perspective (Hasebrink & Hepp, 2017) would allow to follow discursive ensembles across various platforms and to analyze how a variety of different sources, entertainment or information based, unbiased or partisan are interrelated. As we have described, satirical and humorous content is just one way among others to disseminate populist communication and to normalize extreme-right views in discourse. The transmedia approach could also encompass other (social) media outlets of the far right and look for commonalities, overlap, and differences in the various channels. The role of other social media platforms and the role of social media in general (in comparison to other outlets) for the discourse strategy of mainstreaming could not be grasped with our research design. A further relevant addition to our research could be found by focusing on actual users and by investigating how they relate to the satirical populist content in their follow-up communication in other contexts of their every day, regarding their political attitudes or civic engagement. A media repertoire perspective (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012; Taneja, Webster, Malthouse, & Ksiazek, 2012) could help assess the significance of the satirical pages and groups on Facebook in the lives of the citizens and for the mainstreaming of political positions, e.g., are such pages and similar contents a central or peripheral component of users individual media diets and information repertoire.

We conclude that the dissemination and legitimization of extreme right positions in the form of mainstreaming can contribute to a climate of bigotry, hatred, and fear within Western societies, which would then lead to the acceptance of more radical measures taken against perceived threats. While it may not be a direct means of radicalization for individuals, these kinds of "satirical" discourses

may undermine a sense of security and trust in established institutions of the media, the state, and the democratic process. It may cultivate and nourish the grounds on which radical ideas bloom, furthering radicalization under the benign guise of laughter and humorous criticism. In the light of these outcomes, further studies should focus on the preventive measures that can and should be taken against these forms of online propaganda and the normalization of radical political ideas.

References

Alvares, C., & Dahlgren, P. (2016). Populism, extremism and media: Mapping an uncertain terrain. *European Journal of Communication*, *31*(1), 46–57. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323115614485

Aly, A., Macdonald, S., Jarvis, L., & Chen, T. M. (2016). Introduction to the special issue: Terrorist online propaganda and radicalization. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *40*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157402

Ambrose, E. & Mudde, C. (2015). Canadian multiculturalism and the absence of the far right. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 21*(2), 213–236. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2015.1032033

Backes, U. (2018). The radical right in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 452–477). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Baym, G. (2007). Representation and the politics of play: Stephen Colbert's better Know a District. *Political Communication*, *24*(4), 359–376. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600701641441

Beaufort, M. (2018). Digital media, political polarization and challenges to democracy. *Information, Communication & Society*, *21*(7), 915–920. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1451909

Becker, A. B. (2014). Playing with politics: Online political parody, affinity for political humor, anxiety reduction, and implications for political efficacy. *Mass Communication and Society*, *17*(3), 424–445. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2014.891134

Behrmann, S. (2002). *Politische Satire im deutschen und französischen Rundfunk* [Political satire in German and French broadcasting]. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.

Ben-David, A., & Matamoros-Fernandez, A. (2016). Hate speech and covert discrimination on social media: Monitoring the Facebook pages of extreme-right political parties in Spain. *International Journal of Communication*, *10*, 1167–1193.

Bessant, J. (2016). New politics and satire: The Euro financial crisis and the one-finger salute. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(7), 1057–1072. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1206138

Betz, H.-G. (2018). The radical right and populism. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 86–104). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Block, E., & Negrine, R. (2017). The populist communication style: Toward a critical framework. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, 178–197.

Bornschier, S. (2018). Globalization, cleavages, and the radical right. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 212–238). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Brummack, J. (1971). Zu Begriff und Theorie der Satire [On the term and theory of satire]. *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, *45*(S1), 275–377. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03376186

Caiani, M. (2017). Radical right-wing movements: Who, when, how and why? *Sociopedia*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/205684601761

Caiani, M., & Della Porta, D. (2018). The radical right as social movement organizations. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 327–347). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Cammaerts, B. (2018). The mainstreaming of extreme right-wing populism in the Low Countries: What is to be done? *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *11*(1), 7–20. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcx002

Chen, H.-T., Gan, C., & Sun, P. (2017). How does political satire influence political participation? Examining the role of counter- and proattitudinal exposure, anger, and personal issue importance. *International Journal of Communication*, *11*, 3011–3029.

Crittenden, V. L., Hopkins, L. M., & Simmons, J. M. (2011). Satirists as opinion leaders: Is social media redefining roles? *Journal of Public Affairs*, *11*(3), 174–180. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.400

Doerr, N. (2017). Bridging language barriers, bonding against immigrants: A visual case study of transnational network publics created by far-right activists in Europe. *Discourse & Society*, *28*(1), 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926516676689

Dörner, A., & Vogt, L. (Eds.). (2017). *Wahlkampf mit Humor und Komik—Selbst- und Fremdinszenierung politischer Akteure in Satiretalks des deutschen Fernsehens* [Election campaign with humor and comedy—self-staging and extraneous staging of political actors in German satirical TV talk shows]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Downing, J. (2001). *Radical media: Rebellious communication and social movements*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications.

Drüeke, R. & Zobl, E. (2016). Online feminist protest against sexism: the German-language hashtag #aufschrei. *Feminist Media Studies, 16*(1), 35–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1093071

Ellinas, A. A. (2018). Media and the radical right. In J. Rydgren (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of the radical right* (pp. 269–284). New York City: Oxford University Press.

Engesser, S., Ernst, N., Esser, F., & Büchel, F. (2016). Populism and social media: How politicians spread a fragmented ideology. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(8), 1109–1126. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1207697

Ernst, N., Engesser, S., Büchel, F., Blassnig, S., & Esser, F. (2017). Extreme parties and populism: An analysis of Facebook and Twitter across six countries. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(9), 1347–1364. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1329333

Feldman, L. (2016). The news about comedy. *Journalism: Theory, Practice & Criticism*, *8*(4), 406–427. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884907078655

Ferrari, E. (2017). Fake accounts, real activism: Political faking and user-generated satire as activist intervention. *New Media & Society*, *1*(1), 146144481773191. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817731918

Forchtner, B., Krzyzanowski, M., & Wodak, R. (2013). Mediatisation, right-wing populism and populist campaigning: The case of the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). In M. Ekström & A. Tolson (Eds.), *Media talk and political elections in Europe and America* (pp. 205–228). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fuchs, C. (2016). Racism, nationalism and rightwing extremism online: The Austrian Presidential Election 2016 on Facebook. *Momentum Quarterly*, *5*(3), 172–196.

Hameleers, M., Bos, L., & Vreese, C. H. de. (2017). The appeal of media populism: The media preferences of citizens with populist attitudes. *Mass Communication and Society*, *20*(4), 481–504. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1291817

Han, K. J. (2015). The impact of radical right-wing parties on the positions of mainstream parties regarding multiculturalism. *West European Politics*, *38*(3), 557–576. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2014.981448

Hasebrink, U., & Domeyer, H. (2012). Media repertoires as patterns of behaviour and as meaningful practices: A multimethod approach to media use in converging media environments. *Participations – Journal of Audience & Reception Studies*, *9*(2), 757–779.

Hasebrink, U., & Hepp, A. (2017). How to research cross-media practices? Investigating media repertoires and media ensembles. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, *23*(4), 362–377. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517700384

Higgie, R. (2017). Under the guise of humour and critique: The political co-option of popular contemporary satire. In J. M. Davis (Ed.), *Satire and politics: The interplay of heritage and practice* (pp. 73–102). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hylton, K. (2017). I'm not joking! The strategic use of humour in stories of racism. *Ethnicities*, *18*(3), 327–343. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796817743998

Johnson, J. (2018). The self-radicalization of white men: "Fake News" and the affective networking of paranoia. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *11*(1), 100–115. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcx014

Jones, M. O. (2017). Satire, social media and revolutionary cultural production in the Bahrain uprising: From utopian fiction to political satire. *Communication and the Public*, *2*(2), 136–153. https://doi.org/10.1177/2057047317706372

Kallis, A. (2013). Far-right "contagion" or a failing "mainstream"? How dangerous ideas cross borders and blur boundaries. *Democracy and Security, 9*(3), 221–246. https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2013.792251

Koehler, D. (2014). The radical online: Individual radicalization processes and the role of the internet. *Journal for Deradicalization, 1*, 116–134.

Krämer, B. (2014). Media populism: A conceptual clarification and some theses on its effects. *Communication Theory*, *24*(1), 42–60. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12029

Krämer, B. (2017). Populist online practices: The function of the Internet in right-wing populism. *Information, Communication & Society*, *20*(9), 1293–1309. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328520

Landreville, K. D., Holbert, R. L., & LaMarre, H. L. (2010). The influence of late-night TV comedy viewing on political talk: A moderated-mediation model. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, *15*(4), 482–498. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161210371506

Lee, H., & Jang, S. M. (2016). Talking about what provokes us. *American Politics Research*, *45*(1), 128–154. https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673X16657805

Lewis, R., & Marwick, A. E. (2017). Taking the red pill: Ideological motivations for spreading online disinformation. In Annenberg School for Communication (Ed.), *Understanding and Addressing the Disinformation Ecosystem* (pp. 18–22). Retrieved from https://firstdraftnews.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/The-Disinformation-Ecosystem-20180207-v2.pdf

Meleagrou-Hitchens, A. & Kaderbhai, N. (2017). Research perspectives on online radicalization: A literature review, 2006–2016. *King's College London* (pp. 1–74). Retrieved from https://icsr.info/2017/05/03/icsr-vox-pol-paper-research-perspectives-online-radicalisation-literature-review-2006-2016-2/

Önnerfors, A. (2017). Moving the mainstream: Radicalization of political language in the German PEGIDA movement. In K. Steiner & A. Önnerfors (Eds.), *Expressions of radicalization: Global politics, processes and practices* (pp. 87–119). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pérez, R. (2017). Racism without hatred? Racist humor and the myth of "Colorblindness." *Sociological Perspectives*, *60*(5), 956–974. https://doi.org/10.1177/0731121417719699

Pisoiu, D., & Ahmed, R. (2015). Capitalizing on fear: The rise of right-wing populist movements in Western Europe. In Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg (Ed.), *OSCE Yearbook 2015* (pp. 165–176). Baden-Baden: Nomos.

Punathambekar, A. (2015). Satire, elections, and democratic politics in digital India. *Television & New Media*, *16*(4), 394–400. https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476415573953

Rahimi, B. (2015). Satirical cultures of media publics in Iran. *International Communication Gazette*, *77*(3), 267–281. https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048514568761

Rolfe, M. (2017). The populist elements of Australian political satire and the debt to the Americans and the Augustans. In J. M. Davis (Ed.), *Satire and politics: The interplay of heritage and practice* (pp. 37–71). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Salmela, M., & Scheve, C. von. (2017). Emotional roots of right-wing political populism. *Social Science Information*, *56*(4), 567–595. https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018417734419

Shifman, L. (2014). *Memes in digital culture. MIT press essential knowledge series*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.

Simpson, P. (2003). *On the discourse of satire: Towards a stylistic model of satirical humor*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing.

Taneja, H., Webster, J. G., Malthouse, E. C., & Ksiazek, T. B. (2012). Media consumption across platforms: Identifying user-defined repertoires. *New Media & Society*, *14*(6), 951–968. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811436146

Topinka, R. J. (2017). Politically incorrect participatory media: Racist nationalism on r/ImGoingToHellForThis. *New Media & Society*, 7. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817712516

Wagner, A. J. M. & Schwarzenegger, C. (2018). *It's funny cause it's hate: Political satire as right wing propaganda—A study on activism in disguise*. Paper presented at the 68th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Prague (Czech Republic).

Waisanen, D. (2012). Bordering populism in immigration activism: Outlaw–civic discourse in a (counter)public. *Communication Monographs*, *79*(2), 232–255. https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2012.673230

Waisbord, S. (2003). Media populism: Neo-populism in Latin America. In G. Mazzoleni, J. Stewart, & B. Horsfield (Eds.), *The media and neo-populism: A contemporary comparative analysis* (pp. 198–216). Westport: Praeger.

Waisbord, S. (2018). Why populism is troubling for democratic communication. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *11*(1), 21–34. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcx005

Witteveen, D. (2017). The rise of mainstream nationalism and xenophobia in Dutch politics. *Journal of Labor and Society*, *20*(3), 373–378. https://doi.org/10.1111/wusa.12290

Wodak, R. (2017). The "establishment," the "elites," and the "people": Who's who? *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(4), 551–565.

Wodak, R. (2018). Vom Rand in die Mitte – "Schamlose Normalisierung" [From the margins to the center – "Shameless normalization"]. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift, 59*, 323–335. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11615-018-0079-7

Wodak, R., & Krzyżanowski, M. (2017). Right-wing populism in Europe & USA. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 16(4), 471–484. https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.17042.krz

Wright, S., Graham, T., & Jackson, D. (2016). Third space, social media and everyday political talk. In A. Bruns, E. Skogerbø, C. Christensen, A. O. Larsson, & G. Enli (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to social media and politics* (pp. 74–88). New York: Taylor & Francis/Routledge.