Analyzing populist content IV. – visual materials

Radicalization of politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Outline

1. Visual materials as a source of political content

2. Populism in visual materials – examples

Visual materials as a political content

- Basic assumption on the importance of visual materials – affecting our attitudes, values and *also* perception of politics

- What are visual materials: pictures, movies, sculptures (anything you can see)

- Different ways of analysis (similar to text analysis) – both qualitative and quantitative

Quantitative approach

- Similar to other quantitative analysis – theoretical assumptions, ideally formulation of theoretically driven hypotheses (BUT explorative approach possible as well)

- Definition of variables of interest (objects /leader, other members of the leadership, ohther parties/, environment /e.g. mingling with the people/, clothing, policy areas, types of pictures /e.g. Selfies/)

- Usually *comparative* hypotheses (are populist visual materials more *people-centric* than materials of other political parties?) – otherwise how would you know that something is more or less?

- Possible questions:

- In which cirmustances are leaders of populist parties presented?

- How are other political parties presented in visual materials of different political actors?

- *Challenge (not much has been done so far): How to measure populism in visual communication?*

Types of questions (Bell)

1 Questions of priority/salience of media content: how visible (how frequently, how large, in what order in a programme) different kinds of images, stories, events are represented? 'Agenda Setting' studies of news broadcasts would be an example of this kind of question.

2 Questions of 'bias': comparative questions about the duration, frequency, priority or salience of representations of, say, political personalities, issues, policies, or of 'positive' versus 'negative' features of representation.

3 Historical changes in modes of representation of, for example, gender, occupational, class, or ethically codified images in particular types of publications or television genres.

- Try to think of these types of questions in relation to populism

Data in quantitative analysis

- Similar principles as in textual analysis
- Definition of the corpus (data) – which pictures/movies should I analyze?
  - Driven by research questions
  - Possibilities – election period, representative sample, related to a specific topic, different time periods, etc.
- units of analysis – pictures, frames, parts of pictures such as politicians, environement, tonality... (dependent on the question)
- Values – the same as the text analysis (remember: mutually exklusive and ideally exhaustive categories – see Krippendorf)
- Interpretation – prevalent characteristic, comparison...
- Reliability – not that so much of *our* concern in the course but values should be defined as clearly as possible

Qualitative approach

- Deeper understanding of the content

- Visual materials are not translated into numbers or quantifiable categories

- Interpretation, effort to find a context for interpretation

- Meaning instead of numbers

Example I: Doerr

- Qualitative approach
- „visual posters and symbols constructed and circulated transnationally by various political actors to mobilize contentious politics on the issues of immigration and citizenship"
- Transnational spillover
- Comparison of ideologically different political actors
- „how did the SVP and EuroMayday campaigns portray the relationship between immigrants and citizens in order to reach out and mobilize supporters in distinct national contexts and transnationally?"

Data, method and results

- SVP, NPD and LN

- analysis of the black sheep campaign, my sample includes relevant visuals found on web pages and blogs by the groups associated with the cases studied (98 visuals, blacksheep related)

- Discoursive analysis, visual iconography, contextualization (*you do need to follow the method in details, instead concentrate on the qualitative nature of the analysis*)

- Comparison of the ways of transnational spillover and adaptation of communication related to immigration

Example II: Wodak, Forchtner

- Analysis of a specific visual materials – Sagas from Vienna
- Qualitative approach – discourse-historical approach
- „calculated ambivalence" – blurring the line between fiction and reality
- Politics of memory
- Contextual analysis of discoursive practices
- What is important here is the conceptual and analytical background suited to the research questions – remember: research design *follows* your questions

Conclusion

- Visual materials also important for understanding politics
- Possible of their analysis
- Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches
- Very flexible – depending on the research questions
- Data source – images from social networks, party materials, party manifestoes, newspapers…