How German Communication Research Discovered Bourdieu but Missed His Potential for the Study of (Populist) Political Communication

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Abstract

Starting with an outline of Pierre Bourdieu's reception in German-speaking communication research, this article identifies an important omission: his writings on politics and the corresponding symbolic struggles. In particular, the field of research on political communication could profit from the approaches outlined in these publications. This is exemplified by research on populist communication, which has become one of the most important topics in the field of political communication. This contribution argues that, together with Bourdieu's theory of social class, his conception of politics could be a fruitful way to understand current (right-wing) populism, with its construction of "the people," its particular claim to representation, as well as its social-structural basis and appeal to certain groups. However, there are several barriers immanent in the dominant approaches to research on political communication that can be understood from the history of the field and that have hindered the adoption of such a perspective in German-speaking communication research.

The reception of a scholar's work, particularly from other disciplines, is always selective. This is an almost tautological claim, because scholarship always involves the selection of earlier research that new theories and studies can build on. What shapes this selectivity, and how different selections lead to different outcomes, are the more interesting questions. This article describes a case of selective appropriation across national, linguistic, and disciplinary borders with a complex pattern of openness and closure: In international comparison, German-speaking communication research[1] is somewhat open to social theory, but less open to the approaches from Francophone *sciences de l'information et de la communication* (SIC) and to more semiological approaches.[2] Political communication is a field within (German and international) communication research that is somewhat less open to theories of society and rather internationalized, but mostly oriented towards Anglophone literature.

This contribution is a historical analysis of this status quo and an attempt at counterfactual history: It tries to locate some of the missing links arising from this disciplinary and cultural constellation, to explore its historical roots, and to imagine what could have happened if German or international research on political communication had opened up to concepts from French social theory related to the political use of language. It describes how German communication research discovered the work of Pierre Bourdieu but missed his potential for the study of political communication. It then illustrates the untapped potential of his work for this field and the historical reasons why it has not been used, focusing on the example of his writings on political sociology and the phenomenon of populist communication as one of the important concepts (or buzzwords) in recent research on political communication.

If we want to make the most of our analysis of political trends and maximize our contribution to current debates, we should perhaps be prepared to cross several borders: from nomothetic toward interpretive or semiological, constructivist, or performative perspectives; from (social) psychology and mid-range sociological and politological perspectives as the most important external sources from which concepts are borrowed toward more general social theory; and from a cluster of Anglophone (and Germanophone, Dutch, Scandinavian, etc.) literature and scholars toward the Francophone sphere. Pierre Bourdieu's work exemplifies some of these potential new directions, providing a theory of society with its social classes and trajectories shaping their stance toward political developments such as the rise of populism. And it provides a performative theory of politics that sees language use as something shaping social fields rather than merely describing or evaluating social reality, such as populism trying to reconfigure the political field and people's vision of society.

[1] In this paper, "German(-speaking) communication research" refers to a subfield of communication research in which actors from Austria, Germany, and (German-speaking) Switzerland are active (thus also potentially competing for positions in departments where a certain fluency in German is usually required, a barrier for international candidates.) It thus seems justified to speak of a definable subfield. While most of these actors occasionally publish in German, many if not most of their publications are in English. I am only aware of a handful of German-speaking researchers working outside French-speaking areas who have ever published in French.

[2] On the historical differences between the two fields, see Stefanie Averbeck, "Comparative history of communication studies: France and Germany," *The Open Communication Journal* 2, no. 2 (2008). One of the rare exceptions of German-speaking researchers of populism connecting with French-speaking literature is the recent article by Peter Maurer & Rajesh Sharma, "L'usage de narratifs populistes dans les tweets des candidats 'contestataires' aux élections présidentielles en France (2017) et aux États-Unis (2016)," *Revue internationale de politique comparée* 29, no. 2–3 (2022). However, apart from non-French-speaking scholars of populism, they mostly cite French-speaking political scientists and scholars from other disciplines rather than researchers in SIC.

However, there are various barriers to the adoption of such approaches stemming from the history of German-speaking communication, which will be discussed below. Taken together, this contribution is an invitation to reflect on past and future paths in German-speaking and international research in political communication, both to the field itself and to everyone interested in the history and sociology of the field of communication research.

A Short History of Pierre Bourdieu's Reception in German Communication Research

German-speaking communication research has been characterized historically as a field that has turned from normative, individualist, interpretive, and historical perspectives towards empirical social science between 1945 and the 1970s.[3] The most prominent proponent of this social-scientific turn in German-speaking communication research is probably Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, the founding figure of the "Mainz School," which epitomized this reorientation. The turn has been welcomed by its proponents as a sign of renewal for a discipline that had been discredited by its political conformity during National Socialism and as a path toward academic legitimacy by means of scientification. On the other side, this development has probably led to a reluctance toward anything that has either a literary or art criticism, or "grand theory," feel to it.

[3] See Maria Löblich, *Die empirisch-sozialwissenschaftliche Wende in der Publizistik- und Zeitungswissenschaft* (Köln: Halem, 2010). On the earlier reception of sociological approaches, see Stefanie Averbeck, *Kommunikation als Prozess: Soziologische Perspektiven in der Zeitungswissenschaft, 1927–1934* (Münster: Lit, 1999).

Those who were not willing to (completely) follow this turn or were later dissatisfied with the emerging mainstream paradigm of effects- and variable-oriented research had several possibilities:

1. To defend the *older paradigm* despite its reputation as old-fashioned and descriptive—a reputation the proponents of the turn had successfully created over time.

2. To (re-)turn to *historical approaches*. The older schools cannot be reduced to such perspectives, although some protagonists put a strong emphasis on the study of past media institutions and actors. Historical approaches did not completely vanish with the social-scientific turn. There is still a remaining or renewed niche for (often theoretically informed) historical scholarship that is accepted by the discipline as a legitimate, albeit minor field of research (as testified by a vibrant Section for Communication History in the German Communication Association and a number of professorships dedicated to the topic).

3. To turn to *Marxism and critical theory.* Some scholars tried to establish a school of critical communication research as early as the

1960s.[4] However, in the rather centrist to conservative climate in German-speaking communication research during the post–World War II and Cold War eras, and the more general political climate with its suspicion toward left-wing civil servants (exemplified by the 1972 "anti-radical decree" essentially banning them from their professions), those approaches were marginalized in the following decades.[5] One of the few scholars from the Frankfurt School still cited today in communication research is Jürgen Habermas.[6] This may be explained by his reputation not as a radical critical theorist but one that has made him a kind of "state philosopher" of the Federal Republic of Germany. His theories of communicative action and deliberative ethics and democracy are used in German-speaking communication research less as a foundation of a fundamental critique of modern rationalization or of a radically new form of democracy, but more as a template for the empirical analysis of actual discourses along certain quantifiable norms of inclusivity and argumentativity.

[4] Andreas Scheu, *Adornos Erben in der Kommunikationswissenschaft: Eine Verdrängungsgeschichte?* (Köln: Halem, 2012), 12.

[5] Scheu, *Adornos Erben*.

[6] As an example of his reception in communication research, see Hartmut Wessler, *Habermas and the Media* (Cambridge, MA: Polity, 2018).

4. To turn to *constructivist social theory and epistemology*, most importantly the alternative epistemology of radical constructivism or Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory. In the 1990s, those looking beyond low- and middle-range theories and ad hoc models and hypotheses were often attracted to these schools. The "radicalism" of these approaches, whose reception was most importantly centered around the University of Münster, does not lie in their critique of the status quo but in their opposition to naive realism and commonplace conceptions of the social. However, the potential of these schools may have seemed exhausted in the late 2000s (although many ideas in Luhmann's work had not been adopted and others still somewhat reverberate in journalism studies or theories of the public sphere). Most of the German-speaking scientific community may have been tired, if not outright skeptical, of the abstract discussions of concepts such as autopoeisis (does only communication communicate or does social systems theory erase humans as the center of communication?), the "code" of journalism (is it published versus unpublished, topical versus non-topical, information versus no information?), and journalism's relationship with other systems (is it best described as interpenetration, intersection, irritation, de-differentiation, etc.?).

5. To "import" *cultural studies approaches*.[7] However, their reception came with its own difficulties:[8] Some scholars certainly sought a niche for constructivism as an alternative to a mainstream that claimed, based on its reading of critical rationalism, that objective knowledge is possible or can at least be approached by researchers

[7] For example, Andreas Hepp has published an early introduction to cultural studies for media and communication research: Andreas Hepp, *Cultural Studies und Medienanalyse: Eine Einführung* (Wiesbaden: VS, 1999).

[8] On the following, see Katja Schwer, "Typisch deutsch? Zur zögerlichen Rezeption der Cultural Studies in der deutschen Kommunikationswissenschaft," *Münchener Beiträge zur Kommunikationswissenschaft*, no. 2 (2005).

and media professionals. However, this niche was already occupied by the cognitivist epistemology of radical constructivism instead of the social, culturalist, contextual, and self-reflexive perspective of the cultural studies approach. Furthermore, this approach had to compete with or had to endure the same suspicion as other critical approaches, most importantly in Germany in the form of critical theory. Meanwhile, many researchers who had introduced cultural studies approaches into German-speaking communication research have turned toward Continental social theorists or qualitative and critical approaches less strictly tied to cultural studies as foundation for their work.

It may have been the search for alternative social theories that has led those unsatisfied with both the dominant "realist" critical-rationalist paradigm and the established heterodoxy of social systems theory to explore the work of Bourdieu, starting in the 2000s. It addressed both dissatisfactions by proposing a perspective that is non-individualist but still actor-centric, dynamic, and focused around specific practices (as opposed to the seemingly static dichotomies of Luhmann's codes)—an encompassing, abstract description of society that is, at the same time, empirically fruitful.[9]

Thus, Bourdieu seems to be a good fit not for the absolute mainstream but for those looking beyond both the constructivist and functionalist schools and the variable-centered approaches. Still, certain aspects of his work were neglected, as will be shown below.

Quantitative social scientists may find testable predictions, correspondence analyses, and other statistical data in Bourdieu's publications; but also pages of jargon, paradoxical and seemingly tautological phrases; long analyses of Flaubert's *Sentimental Education*, photography in rural France, or Heidegger's worldview; and comparisons between political preferences and the taste for certain types of cheese. This is in stark contrast with the literature usually cited in a large part of the field—papers that review previous research, introduce a number of concepts, and deduce a few hypotheses, followed by a methodological section, the results, and a number of rather straightforward conclusions. Bourdieu's prose, some of his topics, and the complexity of his conceptual and theoretical framework made his oeuvre (like almost all general social theory) seem less useful to much of the dominant pole of the field but attractive to those looking for more than constructs with established scales to combine into hypotheses and models.

Although Bourdieu can be read as a "pure" social theorist instead of an activist or critical scholar,[10] and although his concepts can be used for the most conventional empirical social-scientific research,

[9] The same could be said, for example, about the theories of Anthony Giddens or Jürgen Schimank that some German-speaking communication researchers have turned to. For example, Christoph Neuberger names the theories of Bourdieu, Giddens, Luhmann, and Schimank as foundations that have been used for the analysis of mediatization. See Christoph Neuberger, "Journalismus und Medialisierung der Gesellschaft," in *Journalismusforschung: Stand und Perspektiven*, ed. Klaus Meier and Christoph Neuberger (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2023).

[10] On the reception in Germany beyond communication research and long before the adoption of Bourdieu's theories in this field, see Michael Gemperle, "The Double Character of the German Bourdieu: On the Twofold Use of Pierre Bourdieu's Work in the German-Speaking Social Sciences," *Sociologica* 2009, no. 1 (2009). He notes that the more recent reception has been increasingly apolitical.

terms like bourgeoisie, domination, capital, etc., may still have some connotations of class struggle or armchair leftism and are not quite part of the usual vocabulary of German-speaking communication research.

Where his work has been drawn upon, Bourdieu has therefore been read not so much as the "political" intellectual or "activist" investigator of *misère* and suffering or of neoliberalism or as "communication theorist" (see below). He has instead been considered in German communication research (most notably in Munich) from three different perspectives—very much in line with his reception in the French social sciences and internationally:[11]

1. as an analyst of cultural *distinctions*,[12] to study the homology between social class and media use;[13]

2. as a field theorist and surveyor of scientific and other fields,[14] to describe the structures and trajectories in the field of communication research[15] and to analyze the journalistic field;[16] and

3. as a theorist of social practices and of the practical sense,[17] to conceptualize journalistic or digital practices or practices of media use.[18]

Interestingly, Bourdieu has not been "imported" via French *sciences de l'information et de la communication* (SIC), but directly from sociology as another social theorist just like Luhmann and others. The reasons for this are twofold. First, there is little direct interaction between French and German communication researchers, both due to language barriers (with a lot of relevant research in France still published in French, as opposed to German researchers publishing some works, such as monographic dissertations, in German, but a large part in English-language journals) and paradigmatic differences.[19] Second, Bourdieu is by no means a central figure in SIC as the references (or lack thereof) to his work in introductory textbooks demonstrate.[20]

A topic and perspective in Bourdieu's work that has been largely neglected can be found in his earlier writings on politics that analyze how political concepts and discourses acquire their meaning in symbolic struggles and the power of such discourses to constitute social reality.[21] These writings, mostly published in the 1970s and early 1980s and often in *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, may be grouped together with other texts on the social role of language in general, on "what speaking means"[22]—not only in terms of denotations proper, but more importantly, who is and feels entitled to speak, how different ways of speaking practiced by different groups

[11] See Thomas Wiedemann, "Pierre Bourdieu: Ein internationaler Klassiker der Sozialwissenschaft mit Nutzen für die Kommunikationswissenschaft," *Medien & Kommunikationswissenschaft* 62, no. 1 (2014). Interestingly, Wiedemann (p. 97) emphasizes that Bourdieu's work "has more to offer to the discipline [of communication research—obviously in the German-speaking context] than the publication 'On television' *and a number of works on language and symbolism*" (my translation; emphasis added).

[12] Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Minuit, 1979).

[13] E.g., Klaus Beck, Till Büser, and Christiane Schubert, "Medialer Habitus, mediales Kapital, mediales Feld—oder: vom Nutzen Bourdieus für die Mediennutzungsforschung," in *Pierre Bourdieu und die Kommunikationswissenschaft: Internationale Perspektiven*, ed. Thomas Wiedemann and Michael Meyen (Köln: Halem, 2013); Benjamin Krämer, *Mediensozialisation: Theorie und Empirie zum Erwerb medienbezogener Dispositionen im Lebensverlauf* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013); Michael Meyen, "Medienwissen und Medienmenüs als kulturelles Kapital und als Distinktionsmerkmale: Eine Typologie der Mediennutzer in Deutschland," *Medien und Kommunikationswissenschaft* 55, no. 3 (2007); Michael Meyen and Senta Pfaff-Rüdiger, *Internet im Alltag: Qualitative Studien zum praktischen Sinn von Onlineangeboten* (Münster: Lit, 2009); Helmut Scherer, "Mediennutzung und soziale Distinktion," in *Pierre Bourdieu und die Kommunikationswissenschaft. Internationale Perspektiven*, ed. Thomas Wiedemann and Michael Meyen (Köln: Halem, 2013).

[14] Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus* (Paris: Minuit, 1981); Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art: Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992).

are valued, and how speaking brings about social reality—and on symbolic power as such.[23]

This understanding of communication is rather at odds with the prevalent conception in German-speaking communication research that locates communicative "power" in the quantitative distribution of the "manifest" media content,[24] i.e., the objectively measurable mentions of topics, actors, and opinions, and the effects of this "dose" on a typical user or a user with a set of preexisting attitudes.

Thus, although Bourdieu was attractive to a number of communication researchers looking for social theory that can be read both critically and as distanced analysis (but without the formalism of social systems theory or the stigma of critical theory), there have been particular barriers preventing the widespread adoption of Bourdieu's ideas in the German-speaking areas and in research on political communication in particular. To illustrate this last point and thus contribute to the self-reflection of this field, I will not simply list these obstacles, but use the potential of counterfactual history, taking the example of the recently much discussed topic of populist communication.

To start with, it will be necessary to familiarize ourselves with the history of research on populist communication that shapes the intellectual landscape of this field today and mirrors many features of the overall field of research on political communication.

A Very Short History of Research on Populist Communication

To the best of my knowledge, the concept or phenomenon of populism had not received considerable attention in the discipline of communication research until the 2010s,[25] with a small number of publications in the 2000s (most notably by Gianpietro Mazzoleni[26]). Subsequently, research quickly moved from a small number of publications investigating the relationship between journalist and populist logics[27] to a strongly networked field (at least in Europe) that was able to take stock of its common activities and accomplishments in a number of collective volumes and special issues.[28] In the context of European communication research, my impression is that of a consolidation and convergence toward a perspective that is very much in line with the most prevalent approach in political communication research as a whole: Populism is conceptualized rather formally as an ideology based on a combination of dimensions that can then be operationalized in standardized content analyses and questionnaires in order to explain the occurrence of populist messages and attitudes or related constructs. By combining the concept of populism with other constructs, usually from the repertoire of political communica-

[15] E.g., Nathalie Huber, *Kommunikationswissenschaft als Beruf: Zum Selbstverständnis von Professoren des Faches im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Köln: Halem, 2010); Maria Löblich and Andreas Scheu, "Writing the History of Communication Studies: A Sociology of Science Approach," *Communication Theory* 21, no. 1 (2011); Michael Meyen, "Der Machtpol des kommunikationswissenschaftlichen Feldes," *Studies in Communication and Media* 1, no. 3–4 (2012); Scheu, *Adornos Erben*; Thomas Wiedemann, *Walter Hagemann: Aufstieg und Fall eines politisch ambitionierten Journalisten und Publizistikwissenschaftlers* (Köln: Halem, 2015).

[16] E.g., Thomas Hanitzsch, "Populist Disseminators, Detached Watchdogs, Critical Change Agents and Opportunist Facilitators: Professional Milieus, the Journalistic Field and Autonomy in 18 Countries," *International Communication Gazette* 73, no. 6 (2011); Peter Maurer and Andreas Riedl, "Why Bite the Hand That Feeds You? Politicians' and Journalists' Perceptions of Common Conflicts," *Journalism* 22, no. 11 (2011). For an analysis of the use of Bourdieu's concepts in international journalism research, see Phoebe Maares and Folker Hanusch, "Interpretations of the Journalistic Field: A Systematic Analysis of How Journalism Scholarship Appropriates Bourdieusian Thought," *Journalism* 23, no. 4 (2022).

[17] Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique, précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Geneva: Droz, 1972); Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris: Minuit, 1980); Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques: Sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Seuil, 1994).

[18] E.g., Benjamin Krämer, *Medien-sozialisation: Theorie und Empirie zum Erwerb medienbezogener Dispositionen im Lebensverlauf* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013); Benjamin Krämer, "Strategies of Media Use," *Studies in Communication and Media* 2, no. 1 (2013); Christian Pentzold, "Praxistheoretische Prinzipien, Traditionen und Perspektiven kulturalistischer Kommunikations- und Medienforschung," *Medien und Kommunikationswissenschaft* 63 (2015); Christian Pentzold, *Zusammenarbeiten im Netz: Praktiken und Institutionen internetbasierter Kooperation* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2016); Johannes Raabe, *Die Beobachtung journalistischer Akteure: Optionen einer empirisch-kritischen Jour-*

tion, journalism studies, and media or social psychology, the degree or frequency of populist communication from certain sources can be explained by differences among political actors or media outlets. This approach further allows researchers to experimentally investigate the effect of populist messages and to identify the correlates of populist attitudes—such as low trust in the media. This consolidation is certainly not without exceptions, but German-speaking researchers are among the main actors in the field who follow this paradigm.[29] This leads to highly cumulative research efforts but also, almost inevitably, to a number of omissions and rigidities, such as:

- that certain phenomena, such as "the" people, "the" elite, the in-group, the out-group, etc., and perhaps even "populism" itself, are more or less taken for granted (or even essentialized), rather than analyzed in detail with respect to their discursive constitution;
- the relative neglect of overarching social contexts (classes or milieus), trajectories or biographies, and overall ideologies or worldviews, often in favor of a strictly experimental logic of stimulus and response or analyses including a small number of pre-existing attitudes and covariates;
- the dominance of quantitative over qualitative, interpretive, biographical, historical, and iconographical studies that would focus on meaning, performance, narrative, style, and symbolism; and
- a certain distance toward critical and more or less openly left-wing schools (including, for example, the Essex school of discourse analysis and populism research associated with Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe).

Somewhat distinct from the dominant paradigm, albeit not completely disconnected from it, other researchers have emphasized the performative, discursive, or stylistic aspects of populism. At the same time, they have also established a more explicit connection with communication, discursive practices, and the media (however, mostly outside the German-speaking region[30]). This sets them apart from still other strands of populism research that remain very vague with regard to these aspects or are mostly interested in political theory, party strategies, electoral behavior, and the like.

Based on this characterization of current research on populist communication by German-speaking researchers, we can now turn to the counterfactual question of what could have happened if Bourdieu's political sociology had been an established approach in German-speaking research in political communication, and to the historical reasons why this path has not been taken.

nalismusforschung (Wiesbaden: VS, 2005); Ralph Weiß, "'Praktischer Sinn,' soziale Identität und Fern-Sehen: Ein Konzept für die Analyse der Einbettung kulturellen Handelns in die Alltagswelt," *Medien und Kommunikationswissenschaft* 48, no. 1 (2000); Johannes Raabe, "Kommunikation und soziale Praxis: Chancen einer praxistheoretischen Perspektive für Kommunikationstheorie und -forschung," in *Theorien der Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft: Grundlegende Diskussionen, Forschungsfelder und Theorieentwicklungen*, ed. Carsten Winter, Andreas Hepp, and Friedrich Krotz (Wiesbaden: VS, 2008). Previously cited authors Hanitzsch, Huber, Löblich, Meyen, Pfaff-Rüdiger, Scheu, Wiedemann, and Krämer have all worked or still work in Munich, which highlights the role of this single (but quite large) department for Bourdieu's reception in German-speaking communication research.

[19] Stefanie Averbeck, "Comparative History of Communication Studies: France and Germany," *The Open Communication Journal* 2, no. 2 (2008).

[20] Some introductions to SIC do not cite Bourdieu at all (e.g., Daniel Bougnoux, *Introduction aux sciences de la communication* [Paris: La Découverte, 2001]) or only with regard to rather peripheral aspects, as opposed to dedicating a certain amount of space to his cultural sociology, theory of practice, or works related to journalism (e.g., Bruno Ollivier, *Les sciences de la communication: Théories et acquis* [Paris: Armand Colin, 2007]). Of course, there are some scholars in French sociology studying communication and the media or working at the intersection between sociology and SIC who treat Bourdieu as canonical, such as Éric Maigret, *Sociologie de la communication et des médias* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2015); Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, "Les médias et leurs publics," in *Sciences de l'information et de la communication*, ed. Stéphane Olivesi (Paris: PUG, 2013).

[21] One exception is Benjamin Krämer, "Eine Bourdieu'sche Kritik der politischen Urteilskraft," in *Pierre Bourdieu und die Kommunikationswissenschaft: Internationale Perspektiven*, ed. Thomas Wiedemann and Michael Meyen (Köln: Halem, 2013).

[22] Pierre Bourdieu, "Ce que parler veut dire," in *Questions de sociologie*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu (Paris: Minuit, 1980).

Vous Avez Dit 'Populiste'? Bourdieu's Political Sociology and Populist Communication

Bourdieu on Populism?

To the best of my knowledge, Bourdieu never mentioned the concept of populism. So why read him as a theorist relevant to populism research and speculate about the trajectories of German-speaking political communication research had his concepts been adopted? Bourdieu came close to populism in three very different ways.

First, without mentioning right-wing populism as a concept, Bourdieu distinguished between a liberal and a reactionary type of conservatism (the latter defined by its abhorrence of established politics and its fixation on the hypocrisy of the ruling class—reminiscent of populist anti-elitism).[31] He linked this difference to his conception of social classes, which can thus be relevant to populism research (as discussed below).

Second, his writings on politics focus on the concept of representation and of the idea and/or signifier of "the popular" (see below). We may also refer to Bourdieu's field theory to analyze the changing relationship between the journalistic and the political field due to populism or as a factor enabling populism. However, this idea of a changing relationship between politics and the media is more familiar to scholars of political communication, even if it is rarely expressed in terms of field theory, but more often in terms of concepts such as mediatization.[32] This is why we will focus on the former aspect of representation and signification.

Third and finally, we may speculate that his endorsement of the comedian Coluche's potential candidacy in the 1981 French presidential election followed a kind of "populist" impetus. Bourdieu supported the idea that "just anybody can be a candidate" and linked this to his criticism of politicians' "monopoly" on politics and of the exclusion of "irresponsible" outsiders from the arena of politics in the name of technocratic and juridical "competence" (see below on this division of labor and the resulting disenfranchisement of voters).[33] However, his criticism of technocracy and political exclusion is often counterbalanced by a criticism of demagoguery. Still, he neither conceptualized the counterpart to technocracy as "populism," nor saw demagoguery primarily in populist claims of representation. His critique instead centered on the construction of public opinion by means of opinion polls.[34]

We also have to note that in Bourdieu's writings on politics and symbolic struggles, the role of the media is hardly discussed. Meanwhile, his most important publications on the media focus on the

[23] Pierre Bourdieu, "Sur le pouvoir symbolique," *Annales: Économies, sociétés, civilisations* 32, no. 3 (1977).

[24] As in the famous definition of content analysis by Bernhard Berelson and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *The Analysis of Communication Content* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1948), 6. Despite different challenging paradigms, such as the constructivist school, many scholars continue to adhere to the epistemological or pragmatic principle that media content is a reliably measurable object and as such an identifiable source of effects.

[25] There have been, however, a number of publications in political science with a certain focus on communication. Probably the most important in terms of later citations by communication researchers is Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave, "Populism as Political Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties' Discourse in Belgium," *European journal of political research* 46 (2007).

[26] Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "Mediatization and Political Populism," in *Mediatization of politics: Understanding the Transformation of Western Democracies*, ed. Frank Esser and Jesper Strömbäck (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "Populism and the Media," in *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, ed. Daniele Albertazzi and Duncan McDonnell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "The Media and the Growth of Neo-Populism in Contemporary Democracies," in *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*, ed. Gianpietro Mazzoleni, Julianne Stewart, and Bruce Horsfield (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Julianne Stewart, Gianpietro Mazzoleni, and Bruce Horsfield, "Conclusion: Power to the Media Managers," in *The Media and Neo-Populism: A Contemporary Comparative Analysis*, ed. Gianpietro Mazzoleni, Julianne Stewart, and Bruce Horsfield (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

[27] E.g., Stewart, Mazzoleni, and Horsfield, "Conclusion"; Benjamin Krämer, "Media Populism: A Conceptual Clarification and Some Theses on Its Effects," *Communication Theory* 24, no. 1 (2014).

[28] E.g., Toril Aalberg et al., eds., *Populist Political Communication in Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Carsten Reinemann et al., eds., *Communicating Populism: Comparing Actor Perceptions, Media Coverage, and Effects on Citizens in Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2019); Benjamin Krämer and Christina Holtz-

heteronomy of the journalistic field and its power over other fields of cultural production and the political field, and on the homogenization and *doxa* of the field. In other words, his focus here is not on the media's role in symbolic struggles proper.[35]

Bourdieu on Representation

In the current and subsequent sections, we will start from a kind of straw man, a stereotypically naive understanding of populism which is, however, only a caricature of actual preconceptions about populism in public and academic discourse. We will not attribute these conceptions to individual authors but introduce them to provide a Bourdieusian criticism and give them a Bourdieusian turn. This allows us to discuss why German-speaking political communication research has not taken that turn and what would have happened if it had.

One simple idea of politics would assume a static political space constituted by voters' more or less fixed ideologies or policy preferences, and by the strategic positioning of political parties that maximize their votes. If certain voters no longer feel represented, for example, by European conservative parties shifting toward the center or social-democratic parties neglecting the interests of "the working class" in favor of identity politics, new parties can position themselves in these gaps—for example, right-wing populist parties representing conservative workers (or so this explanation goes).

Whether it is "the working class," "the people of Padania," "the Hindus," or simply "ordinary people," it would seem as if groups that feel disadvantaged and unrepresented (at least relative to their actual number and role in a country) are desperately looking for some representatives (most often a single person more or less supported or appointed by a party or movement). The group "creates" the representative, i.e., chooses this figure to represent them.[36]

But let us imagine another world, in which German-speaking communication researchers of political communication had already read one of the most prominent sociologists of their neighboring country when populism became a thing in the German public sphere or in the Anglophone research literature. These researchers could then point to Bourdieu and challenge the restrictive idea of politics outlined above. As Bourdieu argues, politics is only possible because actors have their own conceptions of the social world, which can be confirmed or changed in political discourse, and are often diffuse. There would be no struggles over the description of the social world if everyone had a precise and infallible idea about their social position and affiliation to social groups, and if actors were not capable

Bacha, eds., *Perspectives on Populism and the Media: Avenues for Research* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2020).

[29] E.g., Sven Engesser et al., "Populism and Social Media: How Politicians Spread a Fragmented Ideology," *Information, Communication & Society* 20, no. 8 (2017); Nayla Fawzi, "Untrustworthy News and the Media as 'Enemy of the People?' How a Populist Worldview Shapes Recipients' Attitudes toward the Media," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 24, no. 2 (2019); Nayla Fawzi and Benjamin Krämer, "The Media as Part of a Detached Elite? Exploring Antimedia Populism among Citizens and Its Relation to Political Populism," *International Journal of Communication* 15 (2021); Jörg Matthes and Desirée Schmuck, "The Effects of Anti-immigrant Right-Wing Populist Ads on Implicit and Explicit Attitudes: A Moderated Mediation Model," *Communication Research* 44, no. 4 (2017); Martin Wettstein et al., "What Drives Populist Styles? Analyzing Immigration and Labor Market News in 11 Countries," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 96, no. 2 (2019); Dominique S. Wirz et al., "The Effects of Right-Wing Populist Communication on Emotions and Cognitions toward Immigrants," *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 23, no. 4 (2018). With only one exception, all of these authors worked in Munich or Zurich at the time of publication or at least before or after. These two departments are among the largest, most well-resourced, and most productive in the German-speaking field and could be described, from the perspective of Bourdieusian field theory, as belonging to the orthodox dominant pole of the field. Together, they have produced a very large part of the literature on populist communication coming from German-speaking universities. Interestingly, the circles in Munich that are interested in Bourdieu and that publish on political communication are almost entirely distinct (with the exception of Krämer). There are of course German-speaking scholars outside this cluster of populism research who also use the approach of populism as multi-dimensional ideology—see, for example, with a rather detailed analysis of different types or host ideologies of populism that are combined with the usual dimensions of populism in the strict sense, Peter Maurer and Trevor Diehl, "What Kind of Populism? Tone

of identifying themselves with different descriptions. However, such struggles would also be pointless if, independently of their social position, everyone could find any description similarly plausible.[37]

Surely, Bourdieu postulates a homology between political space and the space of social inequality (which he described in a particularly useful way for the explanation of certain current populist movements, as I will discuss below).[38] A given group of persons will find certain political offers of representation more plausible and attractive. However, he describes how the representative also creates the group in the full sense. Someone speaks for a group, represents it, but it only fully exists and can be mobilized by virtue of this representation. In the extreme, this relationship between constitution and representation, between delegation and mobilization, is circular.[39]

The aspiring representative invests some symbolic work (in the form of words, theories in the broadest sense, rituals, and other symbolic means), and thus a way of seeing the world and living in it that has often only been vaguely felt (often as discontent) now becomes manifest and allows groups to recognize commonalities where a unifying principle had not been seen before.[40] A group as a mere aggregate recognizes the representation and authorizes the representative, who then manifests and embodies the group, and draws their power from the ability to mobilize it.[41]

The German-speaking researchers who read their Bourdieu would maybe have to be socialized somewhat differently. They would not only have to be familiar with the academic prose that is typical in international journals (which have supplanted the German-speaking journals and monographs as the most legitimate outlets in German-speaking political communication research), but they would also have to be somewhat fascinated by this particular writer's complex, sometimes paradoxical and cryptic but often, at the same time, vivid, metaphorical style. Thus, it would not feel too strange when Bourdieu expresses the logic of political representation (and of any kind of investiture) in religious and magical metaphors: the mystery of ministry, political fetishism, or social magic.[42] Representatives sacrifice themselves, ostentatiously giving up their person, and creating another, a social one, such as "the people."[43] For example, when police searched his party's headquarters, Jean-Luc Mélenchon famously exclaimed: "La République, c'est moi!" and "I am more than Jean-Luc Mélenchon, I am seven million people!"[44]

Bourdieu's analysis of the constitution of groups by their representation is not too different from discursive conceptions of populism.[45] However, the connection with his concept of habitus allows for a quite substantial analysis of the schemata of perception and evaluation that are specific to social classes and other groups and make

and Targets in the Twitter Discourse of French and American Presidential Candidates," *European Journal of Communication* 35, no. 5 (2020).

30 E.g., Niko Hatakka, *Populism in the Hybrid Media System: Populist Radical Right Online Counterpublics Interacting with Journalism, Party Politics, and Citizen Activism* (Turku: University of Turku, 2019); Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism: Performance, Political Style, and Representation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Lone Sorensen, *Populist Communication: Ideology, Performance, Mediation* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

31 Bourdieu, *La distinction*, 528–30.

32 E.g., Gianpietro Mazzoleni, "Mediatization and Political Populism," in *Mediatization of Politics*, ed. Frank Esser and Jesper Strömbäck (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

I would like to thank Peter Maurer who, in his open review of the present article, emphasized the use of Bourdieu's *field theory* for the analysis of populism.

33 Pierre Bourdieu, *Propos sur le champ politique* (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 2000), 55–56.

34 See Pierre Bourdieu, "Störenfried Soziologie," in *Wozu heute noch Soziologie?*, ed. Joachim Fritz-Vannahme (Wiesbaden: VS, 1996). German communication researchers could have also come across this short article on sociology and democracy by Bourdieu in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*.

35 Pierre Bourdieu, "L'emprise du journalisme," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 101–2 (1994); Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur le télévision* (Paris: Liber, 1996); and Pierre Bourdieu, "The Political Field, the Social Science Field, and the Journalistic Field," in *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*, ed. Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2005). In the last of these, he discusses the commonalities between the political field, the field of social science, and the journalistic field (in particular, the struggles to impose a vision of society), and quickly returns to the subject of the heteronomy of journalism in general as a threat to all fields of cultural production.

36 Pierre Bourdieu, "La délégation et le fétichisme politique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 52–53 (1984).

37 Pierre Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 38 (1981).

certain offers of representation and certainmarginnote[42] Bourdieu, "La délégation et le fétichisme politique"; Bourdieu, "Mystère du ministère"; Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'État: Cours au Collège de France (1989–1992)* (Paris: Seuil, 2012), 400. strategies for representing social reality and representing social groups acceptable to them.[46] Thus, even if our hypothetical German-speaking communication researchers found the discursive approach to populism research rather abstract and too far from any empirical application, they would not simply turn it away, but rather seek to specify it with regard to Bourdieusian conceptions of the group-to-be-represented and the group-as-represented.

According to Bourdieu and his German disciples, if a strategy of representation works out, then the result seems natural. Not only the represented but also political opponents, commentators, and even researchers will be convinced, for example, that "ordinary people" are no longer taken seriously by established political actors, that they feel their concerns are neglected, that the political category of "ordinary people" indeed exists in the first place (even if it is not the whole population) and that its concerns are legitimate ones (even if one does not share them).

The rather abstract discursive theories of how populists establish an equivalence of different demands which they then articulate as the basis for antagonism between the people and an elite could be thus refined and extended in different ways based on Bourdieusian theories.[47]

However, these discursive theories of populism à la Laclau and Mouffe have also been neglected in favor of ideational definitions (populism as ideology)[48] in research on populist communication in German-speaking countries and in the larger academic networks which this research is embedded in. This is probably the case because such research is more open to empirical approaches than to political theory and to research that positions itself as value-free rather than explicitly political, e.g., post-Marxist. In this context, the analysis of populist communication mostly starts with the centrality of the people,[49] not with its construction, and explanations of effects start with the priming of social identities,[50] not so much with how they are constructed and appropriated in the first place. Only the exclusionary or anti-elitist part of the construction of the people is sometimes posited as a central dimension of populism.[51]

When actually existing communication researchers attempt to explain the success of populist leaders and the formation or confirmation of populist attitudes, it may seem as if everything is a perfect fit: They identify the pre-existing attitudes, the features of populist messages or of the election programs, and the social-psychological

[38] See Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire." The political field is structured by two complementary principles: the homology with social groups and the historical and strategic relations of the parties. Positions and shifts can only be understood with regard to the internal logic and history of the field and in relation to the positions and strategies of other actors.

[39] Bourdieu, "La délégation et le fétichisme politique."

[40] Pierre Bourdieu, "La représentation politique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 36–37 (1981).

[41] Pierre Bourdieu, "Le mystère du ministère: Des volontés particulières à la 'volonté générale,'" *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 140 (2001).

[43] Bourdieu, "La délégation et le fétichisme politique."

[44] For an analysis of these and other statements by Mélenchon in terms of a populist understanding of representation, see Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le siècle du populisme: Histoire, théorie, critique* (Paris: Seuil, 2020), 55–56.

[45] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005); Chantal Mouffe, *For a Left Populism* (London: Verso, 2018).

[46] Laclau and Mouffe represent a shift away from social class as the main basis for (progressive) political mobilization and democratic renewal, emphasizing that the constitution of "the people" depends on the historical circumstances. However, to address specific groups (which can be social classes as the focus on much of Bourdieu's work, but also other groups, e.g., based on gender), populist communication needs to fit their habitus. Therefore, a discursive approach can benefit from the analysis of the habitus of different groups. Such an analysis would likely not consider whole classes, but factions thereof, perhaps also in combination with gender, age, social trajectories, etc.).

[47] For a review and discussion, see Yannis Stavrakakis, "Antinomies of Formalism: Laclau's Theory of Populism and the Lessons from Religious Populism in Greece," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 9, no. 3 (2004).

[48] E.g., Kirk Hawkins and Christóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, "What the (Ideational) Study of Populism Can Teach Us, and What It Can't," *Swiss Political Science Review* 23, no. 4 (2017); Cas Mudde, "The Populist Zeitgeist," *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004); Ben Stanley, "The Thin Ideology of Populism," *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13, no. 1 (2008).

mechanisms that have to come together in order to convince voters that a populist politician or party represents them.

However, when Bourdieu describes the dialectic of representation, he also emphasizes the dilemma of empowerment and disempowerment. Bourdieu starts from the diagnosis that modern political fields and symbolic production follow a division of labor: One side is the specialized production of cultural, political, and religious offers (among others), the struggle for the symbolic means of representing society, and the monopoly of symbolic power.[52] On the other side, consumption is largely limited to recognizing the types of available offers and identifying with some of them.[53] With regard to political representation, this creates a dilemma, especially for the most disadvantaged groups, as even their representatives have to make concessions to conventional political language that is detached from the groups' experience. To the represented, this language feels "borrowed;" it censors and euphemizes the description of social reality and creates a distance between the representatives and the represented.[54] Representatives, having the symbolic means and access to the means of communication that the represented lack, can even disempower and betray those who, to gain more power, have themselves represented. In this way, they may appropriate the interests of the represented groups and usurp the resulting power as a means to their own ends.[55] The resulting feeling (among their supporters) of powerlessness and resignation is rarely addressed in research on populist communication, whether this feeling is driven by negative coverage of populist actors as self-interested or by more direct contact with their messaging, which may feel inauthentic to some citizens or as a misrepresentation of their situation, experience, and identity.

German-speaking research in political communication sees itself mainly as basic research (at least in comparison to applied research that would be directly applicable to, for example, strategic political communication), but it is often interested in topics that are already acknowledged as social problems in the political, journalistic, and academic mainstream (such as the rise of populism). More or less adopting the definition of such problems as they circulate in public discourse, the research being conducted usually does not propose immediate solutions but reveals relationships that become relevant in the search for causes or answers to these established problems.[56] A theory on the dialectic of populist representation would only very indirectly fit this schema as it is not the most obvious topic in a field mostly oriented toward an analysis of the immediate causes of a phenomenon that is socially defined as relevant. In an alternative world, political communication research could, however, analyze

[49] For a somewhat more nuanced analysis of "people-centrism," see Martin Van Leuwen, "Measuring People-Centrism in Populist Political Discourse: A Linguistic Approach," in *Imagining the Peoples of Europe: Populist Discourses across the Political Spectrum*, ed. Jan Zienkowski and Ruth Breeze (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2019). Still, the analysis is about how politicians refer to the people in terms of syntactics and perspective as an indicator of how central "the people" is in their discourse, not of how it is performatively constituted.

[50] For a discussion of this social identity perspective with a relatively significant number of remarks on the construction of "popular" identities, see Michael Hameleers et al., "The Persuasiveness of Populist Communication: Conceptualizing the Effects and Political Consequences of Populist Communication from a Social Identity Perspective," in *Communicating Populism: Comparing Actor Perceptions, Media Coverage, and Effects on Citizens in Europe*, ed. Carsten Reinemann et al. (New York: Routledge, 2019).

[51] Communication researchers often refer to the conceptualization of Jan Jagers and Stefaan Walgrave, "Populism as Political Communication Style: An Empirical Study of Political Parties' Discourse in Belgium," *European Journal of Political Research* 46, no. 3 (2007). The authors consider exclusion as a potential but not necessary element of populism which, when added to "thin" populism that only "refers" to the people, creates "excluding populism." In this case, exclusion is an aspect that politicians can freely combine with the others (at least logically freely, not necessarily strategically) and that researchers can operationalize independently from the other elements such as anti-elitism. This makes this conceptualization highly attractive for quantitative research, but it does not contribute that much to the analysis of how "the people" is constituted if it is supposed to be central to populism.

[52] Which does not only take place based on descriptions in the narrow sense but also on the quite serious "game" of appropriation of nonverbal means and all kinds of metaphors and analogies. See Pierre Bourdieu, "Un jeu chinois: Notes pour une critique sociale du jugement," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 2–4 (1976).

how populists can symbolically dispossess and disempower their constituency. It might be relevant for a criticism of authoritarian populism to demonstrate in detailed empirical case studies how authoritarianism has disappointed or turned against its supporters (and, not to forget, to document the symbolic and often physical violence against the primary outgroups of each authoritarian movement and government without overly euphemizing it in abstract conceptions of populism). However, German-speaking researchers could associate such a "paradoxical" form of theorizing (e.g., people being both empowered and disempowered) with, in their view, "empirically unfruitful" social systems theory, as it is an emblematic form in which Luhmann formulated a large part of his framework.

Bourdieu on the Possible Class Basis of Populism

Sometimes, a rather unfruitful understanding of populism as pure opportunism—a weathervane of public opinion,[57] or the politics of "simple solutions" appealing to the uneducated masses, a politics that is or attempts to be "popular"—still circulates in public discourse. Political communication scholars informed by Bourdieu's sociology of education could warn us not to assume that education, as it is actually practiced, would simply endow young citizens with all necessary competences. Sometimes, they are only registered rather than conveyed by the education system and acquired earlier or outside school by a population that is then selected by institutions of higher education.[58] It would also be classist to assume that a lack of formal education automatically drives people into the arms of more problematic varieties of populism;.[59] It would be an oversimplification to assume that all types of populism have to be prevented by education or that education is necessarily sufficient to overcome any given form of illiberal populism. However, that populism must have something to do with certain "popular" classes seems to be conventional wisdom—maybe based on etymology or the notion that populism, due to its presumed "simplicity," can only speak to the relatively disadvantaged in society.

In his essay "Vous avez dit 'populaire'?" [Did you say "popular"?],[60] Bourdieu analyzed how the understanding of "the popular" is prone to manipulation according to one's interests and prejudices and condescending views. According to a Bourdieusian interpretation, to praise the "popular" is also to affirm what is an ambivalent product of social domination.[61]

A simplistic historical narrative on the causes of right-wing populism in particular is that of right-wing populist parties as the "new working class parties," since left-wing parties, with their turn toward

[53] Pierre Bourdieu, "Questions de politique," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 16 (1977); Bourdieu, "Sur le pouvoir symbolique." Bourdieu would probably deny that this has fundamentally changed in an online environment in which almost everyone could in principle express themselves politically. He would argue that there is still a difference between those who feel entitled and able to comment on political matters and those who do not, and between those who merely express their approval of existing conceptions and reproduce them without being able to successfully establish new ones, and those who have the symbolic and institutional power to do so.

[54] Bourdieu, *La distinction*.

[55] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire"; Bourdieu, "Mystère du ministère."

[56] It is my impression that German-speaking communication research has also tended to shift from research whose relevance was grounded in ideological controversies and in journalism education, such as research on the effects of journalists' political attitudes on media content or on the quality of private and public broadcasting, to research that is useful for the solution or prevention of social problems, such as research on health communication or prevention of extremism.

[57] Which, as Bourdieu explained, does not exist, at least not in the form that is presupposed by opinion polls: an aggregate of the answers to the same genuinely political questions (assuming that the questions are understood in the same way and that everyone, across all classes, is able to answer them based on a political logic proper). See Pierre Bourdieu, "L'opinion publique n'existe pas," *Les temps modernes* 318 (1973).

[58] Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *La reproduction: Éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Paris: Minuit, 1970). Certainly, educational systems have been adapted since Bourdieu's and Passeron's analysis, not the least due to the reception of their and similar work. However, educational inequality is not a problem of the past, as ongoing research and policy discussions demonstrate.

[59] Without entering into the discussion over "good" and "bad" varieties of populism, it is safe to say that German-speaking communication research

"identity politics," have driven their former voters into the arms of the extreme right.[62] In contrast, Bourdieu's conception of social space can help us disentangle the various influences on populist attitudes and the sometimes inconsistent findings on the social-structural basis of populism (even if we focus on Central European right-wing populism).

When the social-structural and cultural conditions of right-wing populism are investigated, this usually takes one of two forms:

- an analysis along single variables, most often for descriptive or illustrative purposes (e.g., a comparison of the intention to vote for a right-wing populist party by gender that is presented in the context of a more encompassing argument) or as covariates or control variables in more complex models; or
- an analysis along certain key theses or concepts, such as the "losers of modernization" or "cultural backlash" theses, the idea of a silent or noisy counter-revolution to the "silent revolution" of cultural change toward post-material values, or of a new divide between cosmopolitanism and communitarianism.[63]

Even analyses based on the second type of explanation do not always draw on an elaborate conception of social structure, often quickly proceeding to the measurement of the variables implied in the hypotheses, and publications in communication research touch upon such theses only very briefly, if at all. The first type is more common in the field of communication research—if any social-structural covariates or control variables are included at all. Quantitative research in political communication often focuses on other variables and relies on age, education, and gender as proxies for more complex influences of social status and socialization, mostly without specifying any conceptual underpinnings or causal mechanisms. Research on the role of the media for right-wing populism mostly remains detached from analyses of social-structural causes, and German-speaking research on political communication in general has not developed a substantial tradition of social-structural analysis, whether Bourdieusian or otherwise. Due to its historical roots, it often remains media-related public opinion research, as in the beginnings of the Mainz School.[64] It usually starts with opinions on a given issue (more rarely with behavior, such as voting), treating all individual opinions as equal in principle and their aggregate as a relevant social phenomenon because it is the object of both political influence and climate of opinion perceptions. Studies then analytically move backwards to the media-related causes of these opinions.[65]

Bourdieu has contributed at least two important aspects to a fruitful analysis of social inequality: multiple dimensions of social in-

has mostly justified its studies of populism based on its *problematic* relationship with liberal democracy and, in the case of right-wing populism, standards of non-discrimination. More rarely, it is seen as a challenge to democracy potentially leading to greater responsiveness and the closure of gaps of representation. However, more elaborate positive visions or existing models of populism, such as those theorized by Laclau and Mouffe and practiced as inclusive, liberal movements, are usually not addressed. Whether they represent an ideal for democracy is nevertheless up for debate, but let us confine ourselves to the quick clarification that they may at least be considered less problematic than authoritarian, illiberal, exclusionary varieties.

[60] Pierre Bourdieu, "Vous avez dit 'populaire'?" *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 46 (1983).

[61] Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, "Sociologues des mythologies et mythologies de sociologues," *Les Temps Modernes* 211 (1963); Bourdieu, "Vous avez dit 'populaire'?"; Pierre Bourdieu, "Les usages du peuple," in *Choses dites*, ed. Pierre Bourdieu (Paris: Minuit, 1987).

[62] For a recent criticism based on empirical data, see Tarik Abou-Chadi, Reto Mitteregger, and Cas Mudde, *Left Behind by the Working Class? Social Democracy's Electoral Crisis and the Rise of the Radical Right* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2021).

[63] Pieter De Wilde et al., eds., *The Struggle over Borders: Cosmopolitanism and Communitarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Piero Ignazi, "The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe," *European Journal of Political Research* 22, no. 1 (1992); Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "Trump and the Populist Authoritarian Parties: The Silent Revolution in Reverse," *Perspectives on Politics* 15, no. 2 (2017); Lars Rensmann, "The Noisy Counter-Revolution: Understanding the Cultural Conditions and Dynamics of Populist Politics in Europe in the Digital Age," *Politics and Governance* 5, no. 4 (2017).

[64] Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann also founded a polling institute and relied heavily on its results to substantiate her theory of public opinion.

equality and the role of trajectories in addition to positions.[66] First, he described social classes not only in terms of their economic status or role in the relations of production, but in terms of the distribution of different forms of capital (he found economic and cultural capital to be most relevant in the context of his analyses of habitus and lifestyle). The cultural dimension of inequality also manifests itself in a homology between social positions and the structure of schemata of perception and evaluation that then result in differences in lifestyles and in different political and media choices. Second, he drew attention to the role of social trajectories (experienced or expected upward or downward mobility of individuals or whole fractions of classes) in addition to current positions in shaping people's schemata of perception and evaluation——in particular, their views of society and their place in it, and consequently also of politics. Bourdieu then explained the difference between liberal and reactionary conservatism by the different expectations of traditional and declining classes—whether or not they see a chance to preserve or improve their position.[67]

One of the few analyses of right-wing populism that explicitly and strongly relies on Bourdieu's conception of social structure has been published by German sociologist Cornelia Koppetsch.[68] In a somewhat transformed Bourdieusian social space, she identifies three different groups whose perceptions of decline, insecurity, and contestation of the established social order lead them to support right-wing populism: the conservative upper class, the traditional middle class, and the precarious lower class. Without discussing this explanation and its merits in detail, it seems promising to consider the common *and* differential appeal of right-wing populism to several classes and the alliances (and fault lines) in a multidimensional social space, instead of a single class or a small number of variables.[69] If such a perspective were combined with the more or less established Bourdieusian analysis of practices of media use, political communication researchers would be able to better understand audiences of populist communication within the social-structural and media-related opportunity structure of right-wing populism.

As indicated above, German-speaking communication research often follows a variables-based logic of analysis instead of a holistic one (thinking in terms of the additive influence of individual properties instead of complex situations, ways of living, or worldviews with interconnected elements) and is more often interested in pre-existing attitudes instead of social-structural positions or even trajectories as independent variables or moderators. A Bourdieusian conception of social class, based on the specific combination of different features of social inequality and elements of lifestyles or evaluative schemata, is at odds with this logic.[70] In cases where a more holistic, typological

[65] Alternatively, it has often been research on published opinion, diagnosing some biases in the representation of different camps and tracing them back to their causes—such as the opinions of journalists.

[66] Bourdieu, *La distinction.*

[67] Bourdieu, *La distinction*, 528–30.

[68] Cornelia Koppetsch, *Die Gesellschaft des Zorns: Rechtspopulismus im globalen Zeitalter* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019). A number of criticisms have been raised against this book. For example, with respect to her rather undifferentiated and politically problematic diagnosis of a cosmopolitan (left-)liberal hegemony, see Floris Biskamp, "Hegemonie? Welche Hegemonie? Teil IV einer Kritik an Cornelia Koppetschs Gesellschaft des Zorns," SozBlog: Blog der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie, last modified August 16, 2019. Furthermore, Koppetsch's university found that the book contained multiple instances of plagiarism and it was revealed in a criminal trial that the author's partner is a member of the German far-right populist party AfD. However, we are not concerned with her overall argument or potentially overly sympathetic attitudes toward right-wing populists, but only with the potential (which even Koppetsch may not fully use) of a Bourdieusian analysis of social structure for the analysis of right-wing populism.

[69] Or *parts* of classes because, despite some exceptions, it would of course be mistaken to assume, for example, that non-white, non-heterosexual, etc. members of the working class are equally supportive of right-wing populism as their white etc. counterparts.

[70] The frequent use of regression, ANOVA, or structural equation models instead of correspondence analysis, a tool preferred by Bourdieu for his analysis of social fields, also reflects these somewhat diverging logics.

approach is chosen, the German-speaking tradition of milieu analysis and consumer typologies is quite influential.[71] Both in sociology and market research, the search for models of social differentiation that reflect a presumed pluralization and individualization of lifestyles has often led to the development of typologies of milieus that while not outright ignoring Bourdieu's original theories are increasingly disconnected from them. Communication researchers have established a wide variety of typologies ranging from classifications that are mostly data-driven and more or less exclusively based on patterns of media use (sometimes, but not always, at the intersection of academic and commercial audience research) to theoretically informed conceptions of milieus that include social status and political orientations.[72]

There are thus three reasons for the hesitant adoption of Bourdieu's theory of social class and trajectories in German-speaking communication research, in particular, in political communication: the dominant variable- and attitude-based logic; the frequent use of cross-sectional or experimental designs and the neglect of biographies and trajectories; and the fact that the rather small "niche" of typological and lifestyle analysis is already occupied by other, often specifically German conceptions.[73]

In a different world, German-speaking political communication researchers would then analyze the biographies of voters and political leaders. They would not only include "control variables" such as age, education, and gender in their quantitative analysis, but more elaborate measures of social status, lifestyles, and trajectories, both with regard to their main effects and in interaction with mediated populist or other political communication. Finally, researchers would also conduct long-term studies of lifelong political socialization or the transformation of political milieus. However, such approaches are rare in a field of political communication research that mostly uses experiments, cross-sectional surveys, and shorter panel studies. In addition to the influence of its intellectual history, as one of the major fields in German-speaking and international communication research, political communication is also highly competitive and thus incentivizes designs that allow for quick and efficient data collection.

Bourdieu on Charisma and Legitimacy

One tendency in scholarship on populist communication is to attribute the success of populism to the natural charisma of its leaders, their talent for communication or even manipulation, and a style that is naturally appealing to the masses. While this viewpoint is based on a naïve preconception and cannot be attributed to specific

[71] The perfect example of such a typology is the concept of "Sinus-milieus," which has been developed by a private institute for social and market research but also aspires to social-scientific validity and recognition and has been adopted in academic research.

[72] For a typology focusing on media use in the context of other elements of lifestyles and value orientations and with an academic interest (but an emphasis on its applicability in applied audience research), see Peter H. Hartmann and Anna Schlomann, "MNT 2015: Weiterentwicklung der MedienNutzerTypologie," *Media Perspektiven* 2015, no. 11 (2015). For a rather rare theoretically informed typology with a focus on politics and citing both German-speaking sociological theories of social milieus and Bourdieu's *Distinction*, see Raphael Kösters and Olaf Jandura, "A Stratified and Segmented Citizenry? Identification of Political Milieus and Conditions for Their Communicative Integration," *Javnost—The Public* 26, no. 1 (2019).

[73] In addition to the examples in the previous footnotes, German-speaking sociologists have theorized social status and lifestyles as more individualized but open to typologies. See, e.g., Ulrich Beck, "Jenseits von Klasse und Stand? Soziale Ungleichheiten, gesellschaftliche Individualisierungsprozesse und die Entstehung neuer sozialer Formationen und Identitäten," in *Soziale Ungleichheiten*, ed. Reinhard Kreckel (Göttingen: Schwartz, 1983); Stefan Hradil, *Sozialstrukturanalyse in einer fortgeschrittenen Gesellschaft: Von Klassen und Schichten zu Lagen und Milieus* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1987); Gerhard Schulze, *Die Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1992).

scholars, it nonetheless appears in many prominent publications on populism, where authors explicitly argue or uncritically imply that populists must somehow be particularly skilled communicators.

Prior to Bourdieu, Max Weber introduced the concept of charisma as an extraordinary quality that is ascribed to a person who is therefore recognized as a leader. Included in this definition was Weber's observation that it is completely irrelevant how this property is evaluated by a third-party observer: What matters is how it is judged by the "charismatically ruled."[74] Bourdieu refers to Weber's conception of charisma (and to Marx's analysis of fetishism) in his analysis of political representation.[75] Had they been familiar with Bourdieu's take on charisma, German-speaking communication researchers could have re-imported and updated Weber's concept in order to analyze how claims of representation can be centered on the populist leader. In his appropriation of the concept, Bourdieu emphasizes two aspects of representation that ultimately lead to this ascription of unique qualities that seem to exist on their own terms, to take on their own life: the idea of forgotten or ignored work of representation and its relationality.

[74] Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1922), 140.

[75] Bourdieu, "La délégation et le fétichisme politique."

The work of representation not only consists of communicative efforts and institutional processes to establish a certain vision of society and certain categorizations, but also to convey a sense of the legitimacy of the representation. The power of the representative is then based on certain pre-existing or more newly established beliefs that are produced and reproduced in a given field, which in turn legitimize the representative and their claims and support their recognition by the (potentially) represented. The stronger the belief that the claim is not arbitrary—and that words do not produce but only describe reality—the stronger the relation between the represented and the representative, and the stronger the belief in their claims.[76]

[76] Bourdieu, Pierre, "Sur le pouvoir symbolique."

Without recognition, any claim to representation or power is nonsense: "[Le roi,] c'est un fou qui se prend pour le roi avec l'approbation des autres"—someone claiming to be the king is usually considered "crazy," unless everyone agrees that he is the king (and it is still strange or mysterious, as Bourdieu reminds us, how someone can transform into a king just because people believe in him, his legitimacy or qualities, and in the vision of social order that justifies his power).[77]

[77] Bourdieu, *Sur l'État*, 400.

If the represented accept the claim of representation, it is because the social categories it is based on have begun to appear self-evident. To use them seems to describe social reality, not to manipulate it. And the representative appears as the natural incarnation of the represented group. All the work that was necessary to establish the claim to representation can then be ignored or forgotten.

The political field does not have any clear rules or authorities that would legitimate the ways of legitimating power. It thus constantly fluctuates between legitimacy by science and by plebiscite, between technocracy and democratic will, the force of conviction that something is true and the force of recognition by a mobilizable social group.[78] Political claims are not to be judged against a fixed reality, as their "truth" depends on who utters them: If one is in the right position, a description or prediction has the chance to become true (in the extreme case, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy) and a promise can be kept by virtue of the beliefs and size of the relevant groups and due to the right institutional resources.[79] This is a leader's political capital, which can take several forms: institutional (the symbolic, personal, and material resources temporarily transferred by an organization to its officials in return for loyalty to the organization or its positions) and personal (their prestige and popularity).[80]

[78] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire."

[79] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire."

[80] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire."

While notables slowly accumulate their political capital over a whole life, the capital of "charismatic" (or heroic, prophetic) leaders is acquired in a situation of crisis, when the established institutions cannot provide answers, and is legitimated retrospectively if the rhetoric of crisis and the resulting mobilization are successful.[81] If populism is always related to crises in one way or another, Bourdieu would most probably agree with those who emphasize that a crisis is not simply given as such but *performed*.[82]

[81] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire."

[82] Benjamin Moffitt, "How to Perform Crisis: A model for Understanding the Key Role of Crisis in Contemporary Populism," *Government & Opposition* 50, no. 2 (2015).

This personal authority is, however, only possible through a group that authorizes it—and this in turn authorizes the group in their identity and unity: An actor speaks out what had been ignored or had only been tacitly felt, the pre-linguistic and pre-reflective dispositions in a population—sometimes theatrically in order not to let it pass over to silence again—and this resonates with the group if this discourse matches those dispositions.[83]

[83] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire."

German-speaking (and international) mainstream research on political communication often sees populist leaders only as "sources" of messages whose "manifest content" or effect is to be analyzed, not as socially located, symbolic, admired (or hated) figures. Perhaps this shows an understanding of "modern" social-scientific research (as opposed to a past with supposedly merely "individualist" and not actually "analytical" approaches) as necessarily abstract, generalizable, and thus impersonal—or in other words, an attempt to distance oneself from interpretive, "subjective," not actually "empirical" research.

Certainly, research on political communication is often, but not always, centered on the individual, in the sense that theories and studies focus on individual attitudes and political action. The only exception are a few researchers in political communication who strictly

follow Luhmann's "anti-humanist" theory of social systems to analyze the relationship between politics and the media. However, the interpretive analysis of the symbolic character of individual populist leaders and of their claims may be met with skepticism in German-speaking communication research, because it may be seen as a case study that is not clearly "empirical" (but "essayistic," "impressionistic," merely "descriptive," etc.) and of questionable generalizability.

We can imagine a set of German researchers, who instead of producing the rather prosaic and formalist research on political communication we see today would have somewhat rethought their style of research as a result of intensive contact with Bourdieu. These readers of the French theorist might have partly broken with their habitus in order to follow his somewhat paradoxical approach to the analysis of the social magic of representation: To understand this approach, it is necessary to look at politics with a disenchanted regard in order to be again astonished that it works and to grasp how it does so. Breaking the spell, we gain the ability to see what is—despite its real social consequences—only based on appearance and belief. Interpretative analyses should be conducted that take into account how crises are performed, how leaders try to authorize themselves, and how claims to power realize themselves if, together with the right styles and prelinguistic dispositions, they produce charisma—or, on the other hand, how this all fails.

Bourdieu on Reflexivity

Continuing with our counterfactual case, had German-speaking communication researchers been familiar with Bourdieu's general emphasis on reflexivity in the (social) sciences,[84] they might have reflected on the forces that shape their field and their perspective on social reality, and how their research itself is a social force that shapes social reality. Over the course of the last several decades, these readers of Bourdieu would have become aware of the reasons for the unquestioned legitimacy of their field within the overall field of communication researchers, of their unquestioned understanding of politics (the *doxa* of their field, as Bourdieu would put it), and of the limitations of the prevalent realist epistemology.

Historically, at least since the social-scientific turn, research on political communication can be considered the most legitimate field in communication research, a field that does not have to legitimize itself and that is almost equated with communication research as a whole.[85] Researchers engaging in self-reflection on the doxastic foundations of their field may speculate that the price for this legitimacy is that political communication research does not become overtly

[84] Pierre Bourdieu, *Science de la science et reflexivité* (Paris: Raisons d'agir, 2001).

[85] Other fields with similar legitimacy are media effects and journalism research. However, it may be said provocatively that they are in fact sub-fields of political communication research as journalism is almost reduced to political journalism and media effects have almost always been effects on political or politically relevant attitudes (although the rise of health and environmental communication and similar fields has somewhat changed this almost exclusive focus).

political itself, keeping its demonstrative equidistance toward "the extremes," and that it limits itself to a narrow understanding of the political as institutionalized politics.[86]

Even if German-speaking political communication research is usually not critical or political in the sense of challenging the very idea of the political, it is normative and in this sense "critical" by measuring empirical phenomena against the norms of liberal democracy and journalistic professionalism.[87] This implies a functionalist understanding of the media as objective, i.e., informative and balanced (with fears of bias and tabloidization, or more recently, disinformation), and integrative (with fears of fragmentation or, more recently, polarization).

Populism then becomes relevant as a threat to liberal democracy and to quality journalism, undermining the trust in their existing institutions and contributing to polarization by strengthening the extremes. Of course, this understanding runs counter to a positive or critical understanding of class antagonism or an antagonism based on unfulfilled democratic potential and the closure of political space by elites, as emphasized by some theorists of left-wing populism.

Based on Bourdieu's "theory of political communication" outlined above, researchers could also reflect on the realist understanding of the social world—and public opinion in particular—brought about by the social-scientific turn and probably associated most strongly with the Mainz School. In this paradigm, social phenomena are usually treated as given entities with measurable properties, such as a social group existing in society whose members have a range of sociodemographic characteristics and opinions with their causes and consequences.

Furthermore, while typical studies in political communication may acknowledge that many concepts are contested in political discourse and that symbols or statements can be ambiguous, typical approaches and methods often require researchers to treat meaning as more or less fixed or the range of meanings as closed—for example, in standardized questionnaires or content analyses (which is, of course, perfectly legitimate in many contexts). A performative, almost circular understanding of communication, such as in Bourdieu's conception of symbolic power, assumes that communication can contribute to the constitution of the phenomena it claims to describe; its "truth value" lies in the power to make itself true if the right social conditions are met.[88] In contrast, a more straightforwardly realist paradigm sees communication as conveying information and opinions. If it is assumed that communication can always be judged against an external standard of realism, then the main schemata of analysis are whether communication contains information or disin-

[86] On the narrow definition of the political and the predominant functionalist and variable-based paradigm in (US and European) political communication research, see most recently, Sean Phelan and Pieter Maeseele, "Where Is 'The Political' in the Journal *Political Communication*? On the Hegemonic Articulation of a Disciplinary Identity," *Annals of the International Communication Association* (2023). Notably, these authors reference Laclau and Mouffe, but only cite Bourdieu once in passing, with some of his terminology tingeing the text.

[87] See the contributions in Matthias Karmasin, Matthias Rath, and Barbara Thomaß, *Normativität in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013), on the prevalent forms of normativity in (German-speaking) communication research. In the same volume (p. 329–51), Christiane Eilders identifies the main pattern of normativity in political communication research as the expectation that the media inform the public and allow for the formation of opinions in the free exchange of positions, thus legitimizing democracy. She also discusses issues of integration and fragmentation in relation to online communication. Christiane Eilders, "Öffentliche Meinungsbildung in Online-Umgebungen: Zur Zentralität der normativen Perspektive in der politischen Kommunikationsforschung," in *Normativität in der Kommunikationswissenschaft* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013). Other contributions in the volume also deal with normativity in journalism and media effects research and public sphere theory. Among the critical schools, only feminist scholarship is represented in the volume with a separate article: Tanja Thomas, "Feministische Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft," 397–420. While Thomas's article references Bourdieu, other chapters briefly address the Frankfurt School, Cultural Studies, and Marxism.

[88] Bourdieu would of course be the last social theorist to deny that there is such a thing as true and false statements about the social world or the world in general. He would only insist that it is simplistic to assume that it is the sole purpose and/or effect of political, social-scientific, journalistic, and other communication to simply reflect reality or that all communication can be judged against this standard.

formation, represents opinions in an unbiased or unbiased way, or is objectively more or less persuasive.

This realism concerning social entities and meaning leads to the risk of contributing to what Bourdieu has called a "theory effect"[89] that (co-)creates and essentializes the very social phenomena that a theory, ideology, or discourse describes, if researchers do not break with unreflected scholarly or everyday preconceptions of the social world.

[89] Bourdieu, "Décrire et préscrire."

Researchers informed by Bourdieu's reflexive social science would therefore be careful about how they might reproduce the very categories constructed in claims of representation or exclusion, and how their research inevitably contributes to the ineluctably politicized constitution of social reality: who is entitled to speak publicly, what categories speakers take for granted or successfully establish, and consequently, what the relevant objects and sides of "public opinion" are.

For example, in populism research, one may reproduce the idea of "the people" as a seemingly natural, pre-existing basis of sovereignty and exclusion.[90] Or researchers might risk adopting the categorization of outgroups that right-wing populists perform, such as "migrants" as an almost eternal category of people that will always remain alien and incompatible to the native population, no matter their personal histories or legal status.

[90] On the risk of reifying "the people," with a short reference to Bourdieu, and the lack of analyses of how "the people" is constructed, see Benjamin De Cleen, "The Populist Political Logic and the Analysis of the Discursive Construction of 'The People' and 'The Elite,'" in *Imagining the Peoples of Europe: Populist Discourses across the Political Spectrum*, ed. Jan Zienkowski and Ruth Breeze (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2019).

A performative perspective or one that is based on symbolic struggles starts one step earlier, with the strategies and contexts in which those meanings are elaborated. It does not only ask, for example, how central "the people" is in political discourse or in individual political beliefs, but how it is constituted. So if German-speaking political communication research had started to adopt Bourdieusian concepts and reflexivity a while ago, it would be able to take different perspectives on populism today.

Conclusion

German-speaking research on political communication is a rather ahistorical field. There is not much interest in the field's history, maybe because the presently prevailing form of empirical research (with canonical methods, now facilitated by handy online tools, massively increasing volumes of data and computing power, etc.) is seen as the end of history or as the right path to progress by ever-accumulating knowledge (the right path that was taken when speculative, subjective, or ideological schools had been overcome). Theories like Bourdieu's may be adopted in such a field as a repertoire for timeless concepts to be cast into fixed scales, but would also offer

the chance to study historical changes in social structure and in the political or journalistic field—for example, in order to identify the preconditions and opportunity structures for the success of populism, the chance for a theoretically informed social-historical and historical-reflective turn.

However, as part of the social-scientific turn, German-speaking political communication research took a different intellectual and institutional form and position and epitomizes that very turn, with research on populist communication recently epitomizing political communication research. The field is centered on communicators and messages instead of social structure and ways of living, on constative and persuasive instead of performative communication, and on directional effects instead of the circular constitution of both sides of political communication, the communicators (or representatives) and the audience (or constituency). German-speaking political communication research is usually variables-based and most often cross-sectional instead of based on a holistic analysis of milieus and the trajectory of social groups, and it mostly relies on a realist epistemology of the social. It sees its relevance in the explanation of phenomena around institutionalized politics, most importantly dynamics of opinions, not in the uncovering or critique of "social magic" or dispossession. Bourdieu's reception in German-speaking research on political and populist communication has therefore not simply been hindered by the field's increasing orientation toward Anglophone literature and publication outlets and the neglect of Francophone contributions (his writings on politics have been translated to German and English over time, so accessibility is not the main barrier), but probably more importantly by the foundational, almost doxastic ideas about what makes communication research "(social-)scientific" and relevant.

Maybe we could have reached the same conclusions without the counterfactual encounter between Bourdieu and populism research by German-speaking political communication researchers. However, it seems that populism research in its dominant form and Bourdieu's concepts are something of a perfect mismatch, given populism's relationship with representation, charisma, social class, and the question of what makes it relevant. Such encounters, in particular when compared to seemingly similar ones (e.g., Bourdieu and media reception or journalism research), have a unique potential for historical self-reflection and for a renewal of fields of research with strongly institutionalized perspectives and practices.

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